DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 340 216 FL 019 932

AUTHOR	Johnstone, Richard
TITLE	Communicative Interaction: A Guide for Language Teachers.
INSTITUTION	Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research, London (England).
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-948003-08-1
PUB DATE	89
NOTE	218p.; Illustration by Dom Carpenter.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC09 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Class Activities; *Classroom Communication; Classroom Research; Classroom Techniques; *Communicative Competence (Languages); Foreign Countries; *Interpersonal Communication; *Language Proficiency; Professional Development; Second Language Instruction; *Second Language Learning; *Student Motivation

ABSTRACT

Aspects of communication, particularly in the language classroom, that contribute to or inhibit communicative interaction are discussed in this 11-chapter book. The first chapter offers a general discussion of the elements of interpersonal communication. Chapters 2 and 3 outline strategies that language teachers might adopt to engage and sustain communication in the classroom. Two kinds of strategies are examined: those that reduce problems and simplify the learning task, and those that create challenges for students. Chapters 4 through 7 focus on strategies that can be introduced into the classroom to enhance communication, including those that: (1) reduce the scope of a communication problem; (2) help the student achieve his communication goal without modification; (3) develop either basic interpersonal communication skills or cognitive-academic language proficiency; and (4) enhance motivation. The eighth chapter looks at the functions involved in important everyday and specialized types of speech act. Chapter 9 suggests classroom activities for promoting range, fluency, and accuracy of communication. Practical ways in which the teacher can design action research to improve classroom communicative interaction are offered in chapter 10, and the final chapter outlines a developmental, as contrasted with a traditional content-based, language curriculum model. (MSE)

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COMMUNICATIVE INTERACTION:

a guide for language teachers

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CILT

Communicative interaction: a guide for language teachers

by

Richard Johnstone

Illustrations by Dom Carpenter

CILT

Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research

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First published 1989
Copyright © Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research
ISBN 0 948003 08 1

Printed in Great Britain by Warwick Printing Ltd

Published by Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research,
Regent's College, Inner Circle, Regent's Park, London NW1 4NS

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INTRODUCTION

This book owes much to a research project on Communicative Interaction in Elementary Foreign-language Teaching*, funded by the Scottish Education Department and co-directed by my former colleague Rosamond Mitchell and myself. Ros took responsibility for writing the research report (recently published by CILT as *Communicative language teaching in practice*), while I undertook to prepare a document that would take the research findings as a starting point. A first version, in the form of a Handbook, was commissioned by the Scottish Education Department and disseminated to schools in 1987. The present Guide is an updated, expanded and re-worked version of the original Handbook, it is more focused on communicative interaction as opposed to communicative methodology in general, and its final two chapters are new.

While the present Guide gratefully draws on Ros's research report, it is intended to differ from it in a number of ways. First, the research findings related to the initial two years of secondary education, whereas the Guide tackles communicative interaction at all levels. Second, the research was conducted in the early 80s, whereas the Guide attempts to deal with the present and the future, as well as with the recent past. Third, whereas the research report has the advantage of being based on a meticulous empirical investigation of classroom events occurring in a small number of Scottish schools, the present Guide draws more speculatively on a much wider range of evidence that includes:

- empirical research and development in foreign-language classrooms, in which I myself have been involved, along with colleagues in the Education Department of the University of Stirling;
- published research on aspects of communicative methodology, from various parts of the world;
- foreign-language films. This does not imply of course that spoken language in the cinema is the same as spoken language in the world outside, but nonetheless films are a rich resource for exemplifying many of the interactional strategies of communication that are within the grasp of foreign-language learners in classrooms and elsewhere;

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* **Referred to in these pages as the CI Research Project**

* anecdotal evidence from ordinary life, reflecting the successes and failures of friends and myself in our attempts to communicate;

* policy statements and guidelines on foreign-language teaching, particularly those relating to the new systems of curriculum and assessment that are being introduced, such as Standard Grade and GCSE.

As its title indicates, the Guide is about **communicative interaction**.

It is not about how to devise a syllabus, how to draw up a scheme of work, how to organise a unit, how to prepare or evaluate course books or supplementary materials, or how to devise or conduct assessments, formal or informal. As such, it does not attempt to deal with many of the important issues that foreign-language teachers must face at present. It is therefore not intended to be a guide for teaching to a particular examination.

Nonetheless, of all the issues facing foreign-language teachers, it is my firm belief that communicative interaction is the most central and the most in need of further development.

A communicative approach has gained widespread acceptance, which does not mean that it is necessarily being implemented on a large scale, though let it immediately be acknowledged that many achievements have been remarkable. In many cases, however, classroom communication has been implemented in a limited form, characterised by the **problem-reducing** or **reduction** strategies that are described in these pages. How the modern languages profession in general might attain a richer and more positive form of communicative interaction must surely be the main challenge that it faces at present.

To my mind, the answer must lie in teachers themselves examining and experimenting with the basic principles and procedures of communicative interaction in a foreign language, in and out of formal educational settings, rather than in devising yet more syllabuses, yet more worksheets, yet more graded tests or in compiling another thousand authentic texts each of which is transformed into a communication task that is voluminously outlined in English and which often requires the extensive use of English for its completion.

I am delighted to acknowledge the expert, stimulating and indefatigable support that Ros provided in this and in several other research projects over the past ten years, all of them based at the University of Stirling.

Grateful thanks are also due to the many schoolteachers and their pupils who willingly participated in these projects; to several advisory committees; to several postgraduate research students whom I have supervised, but especially Hussein al Ahmed; to many friends and acquaintances working within the Council of Europe network and to my other present and past research colleagues at Stirling - Diane Kent, Mary Kilborn, Ilse MacLean and Brian Parkinson.

I also wish to express my most appreciative thanks to the Scottish Education Department, and in particular to Tony Giovanazzi, specialist HMI in Modern Languages, and Ian Robertson, HMI, of the Research and Intelligence Division, for their encouragement, helpful advice and strong support. Through their good offices a grant was obtained from the Scottish Education Department

that relieved me temporarily of some of my normal teaching and administration duties and enabled me to prepare the first version of this book.

Despite this wealth of generously given support that I have received, the responsibility for the conclusions and recommendations in the *Guide* rests with myself alone.

Let me finally acknowledge the support made so readily available by the staff of CILT in bringing this project to completion.

Richard Johnstone

CHAPTER ONE

THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE

Some fortunate people appear to have a talent for communication that is so intuitive and natural as to defy analysis. Indeed, the very attempt to analyse what, how and why we communicate, to dissect an apparently organic process into component elements, may at times have the effect of making it less rather than more accessible to our understanding.

At the same time, however, the opposite is also true. However well-educated and highly qualified we may be, we all at times find it extraordinarily difficult to get through to others. That is why there is a positive boom in courses geared to developing skills of communicative interaction in doctors, lawyers, social workers, personnel managers and many others - on the grounds that not even persons of high cognitive ability can take them for granted.

In the present book major precedence is given to people interacting with each other, in pursuit of communication. It is mainly about teachers and learners interacting in schools, but it also provides examples of interaction, of varying degrees of success, drawn from real life and from films.

It is not suggested that the many other considerations which foreign language teachers have to bear in mind, such as syllabus design, course books, authentic materials, technology and assessment, are unimportant. If a communicative approach in schools is to succeed, however, they can hardly be as important as interpersonal interaction.

THE EXCHANGE OF MEANINGS

Common to most versions of a 'communicative approach' is the assumption that language will be used in order to exchange meanings, whether explicit or implicit, in speech or in writing. This does not eliminate the use of language for other classroom purposes, such as drilling structure, learning vocabulary or rehearsing dialogues. These may be useful in building up aspects of knowledge and skill required for exchanging meanings, but they belong to the category of 'practice' rather than 'real' language.

The exchange of meanings implies many things, of which two are of major importance:

Unpredictability

First, an ability to cope with 'unpredictability'. If we were totally certain in advance of an interaction of how it would develop in both its explicit and implicit meanings, there might not be much point in participating in it. Often, of course, there are aspects of an interaction that we can successfully predict, and if we could predict nothing we would have great difficulty in making sense of what was said - but we can never totally predict what the interaction will mean to the others involved. There has to be some degree of uncertainty about exactly how it is going to develop or what it is going to mean.

Negotiation

Second, an ability and a willingness to 'negotiate' with the other person(s), in order to arrive at a shared meaning. It is naive to assume that information can always be parcelled up and posted from Person A to Person B. The message transmitted by A will often not be the same as the message received by B, because A and B are different people, both genetically and environmentally. Indeed, communication may be necessary precisely because they are so different from each other. It would not be so necessary among identical organisms existing in the same environment. If A and B then are to share the same meaning, they may need to engage in a process of 'negotiation' for a while.

ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATIVE PERFORMANCE

Of central importance to any learner of a foreign language must be the acquisition of vocabulary, a point well expressed in a report of the Assessment of Performance Unit[1] in respect of 13-year-olds learning French:

> *Lexical knowledge has been identified as the most important factor on all of the assessment tasks. Pupils who had the highest scores were also those who had the most extensive knowledge of vocabulary. Grammatical knowledge, if it is to be applied effectively, depends also on adequate knowledge of vocabulary ... The main conclusion of all three surveys ... emphasises the central importance of vocabulary for all early learners and demonstrates its relationship to grammatical competence generally.*

Beyond the acquisition of vocabulary, it is useful to look at communication under four headings[2]. Experts will always disagree on how many headings there should be and exactly what they should consist of, but among the most important must surely be the following which in each case are exemplified by one comprehension and one production activity that a successful learner performs:

Phrase/sentence structure, e.g.

- identifies markers of number, agreement and tense; recognises patterns of word-order and of intonation;
- creates a new utterance based on an internalised rule, i.e. goes beyond the reproduction of fixed phrases.

Discourse structure, e.g.

* identifies markers which denote a particular type of extended language - e.g. that it is a classroom lesson, a conversation, a report, an interview, a debate, a speech, a tourist transaction; and that it is beginning, is developing, is taking a new direction, is coming to an end, is being summarised, is at an end, is being linked to another event;

* is able to do the above productively in speech or writing; and when interacting with others is able to take turns appropriately, e.g. knows when and how to initiate, to interrupt, not to interrupt, to digress, to respond, to link, to close down.

Social usage, e.g.

* recognises or infers from the verbal or non-verbal context the particular speech functions that an interlocutor wishes to express, e.g. 'offering', 'refusing', 'requesting', 'complaining', and that this is being achieved in a particular manner, e.g. formal or informal, polite or impolite, exaggerated or understated, ironic or straightforward;

* expresses speech functions such as those mentioned above and does so in an appropriate manner (formal or casual etc), depending on the context.

Communication strategies, e.g.

* when encountering an obstacle to comprehension, is able to find some way of overcoming this, e.g. by asking the interlocutor to repeat, paraphrase, clarify, or by subsequently asking another person or by consulting a reference book;

* when struggling in order to express intended meanings, somehow manages to 'cope', i.e. to find some word or phrase that however inelegantly or inaccurately gets at least some of the meaning across and that temporarily at least keeps the conversation going; or actively enlists the cooperation of the interlocutor in 'repairing' the breakdown.

From the above, which are only intended as illustrative examples and not as definitions, it will be evident that if communication is to take place, then different types of rule must be internalised - though 'rules' may not be the best word. 'Patterns' or 'conventions' may at times be more appropriate. It is not suggested that a learner's knowledge of these different types of rule develops apace. It is quite likely for example that conventions of social usage, other than very simple distinctions such as the one between *tu* and *vous* (though in fact this is not such a simple distinction as it may seem), take longer to develop than communication strategies.

AN UNDERLYING RESOURCE

At a deeper level, there must necessarily be a resource, consisting of at least three different aspects:

Knowledge

There must be knowledge of world affairs, what the world is like, what people are like, what people do, how people communicate. Some of this knowledge will be conscious, and we may even be able to summon it up in order to examine it. Much however will be unconscious - we all know certain things without knowing that we know them, and communicative performance in any language must certainly draw on this.

Problem-solving

To take a simple example: if we are abroad and running short of money, we must work out some means of coping. We set ourselves a goal, e.g. obtaining money, and work out how best to achieve this, e.g. by persuading a friend to lend us some money. We may need to devise a strategy of persuasion that takes account of our friend's special characteristics. That is, we have made use of our problem-solving resource. We might then employ our command of sentence structure, discourse structure, social usage and communication strategies in order to accomplish the task.

In accomplishing most everyday tasks, it may not be necessary to employ a high level of thought or an advanced level of language proficiency. Instead, it may suffice to make use of our everyday practical commonsense experience of life, and of what have been called 'basic interpersonal communication skills'[3]. At this level, language may not be required to carry the full burden of communication. It may be supported by facial expression, gesture, mime and various other contextual cues.

Other kinds of task, however, require a higher level of cognitive planning and a different kind of language proficiency. Tasks of this sort might consist of engaging in a debate, or of describing an event, as it occurs, to an audience that cannot see what is happening. In such cases, language alone must do almost all of the work. To take the instance of describing an event, careful organisation will be required in order to present the sequence of activities in a coherent order, according to each their due importance. The proficiency required here has been called 'cognitive-academic language proficiency'[4].

An important aim of foreign-language teaching in schools must surely be to promote the speedy development of basic interpersonal communication skills and the more gradual development of cognitive-academic language proficiency, enabling learners to solve different levels of problem.

Affectivity

We are not machines that can simply be switched on and off and made to serve highly specific purposes that are determined by others. We have attitudes and emotions that we must be able to regulate in such a way as to communicate effectively. At times we may need to relax, at other times to concentrate very hard. At times we may choose to be fairly aggressive and at other times to be supportive. Our affective resource will put these emotions and attitudes at our disposal.

SPONTANEITY AND REFLECTION

The first two paragraphs of this chapter suggest that there are two complementary sides to communication: one being intuitive and spontaneous, the other being analytical and reflective. On the evidence available[5], it is not unfair to suggest that in many cases current practice in schools, despite undeniable improvements in recent years, is neither spontaneous nor reflective to an appropriate degree. There is still a substantial amount of unspontaneous and unreflective drill and practice, even if nowadays this is geared to functions and notions in context rather than to structures out of context as was often the case in the 70s[6]. This book argues for pulling apart, though not destroying completely, the middle ground that consists of drill and practice.

More spontaneity

In the one direction, it argues for a move towards less cerebral, more stream of consciousness activity: 'letting it all hang out', from time to time switching off the conscious monitoring device that controls language form and that imposes a sense of personal identity, in order to allow language to flow more freely to and from its rich underlying associative sources.

More reflection

In the other direction, it recommends a move towards more analytical reflection initiated by learners themselves, at times in their native language and at other times in their foreign language, both in silent thought and in overt combinations of listening, speaking, reading and writing, as they analyse communication problems and develop, test out and modify their ideas on how best to solve them.

CHAPTER TWO

TEACHERS : PROBLEM-REDUCING STRATEGIES

This chapter and the next outline a range of strategies that teachers might adopt in order to engage in and sustain communication with pupils in the classroom.

A distinction is drawn between two sorts of strategy:

** Problem-reducing, and*

** Problem-creating.*

Both are geared to communicative interaction and neither consists merely of 'practice' language. Problem-reducing strategies make things easier for learners, whereas the problem-creating variety offer more of a challenge.

It is suggested that a communicative teacher would wish to draw on both sorts of strategy, but that problem-creating strategies have the greater potential.

PROBLEM-REDUCING STRATEGIES

These are set out below in two groups (comprehension and production), each of which is briefly discussed in general terms, then each strategy within the group is exemplified in turn. Most of the strategies could be exemplified in terms of both comprehension and production, but for the sake of brevity the present procedure has been adopted.

Comprehension

- **Regular checks**
- **Familiar words**
- **Course-book topics**
- **Lower cognitive level**
- **Immediate repetition**
- **Recycling of information**
- **Paraphrase**
- **Other aspects of redundancy**
- **L1 cognates**
- **Slower, clearer talk**
- **Exaggerated intonation, emphasis**

- Structurally simplified language
- Mime, expression, gesture
- Range of sensory focus
- Variety of models
- Clarity of discourse markers
- Key vocabulary and structure, notified in advance
- Simple tasks, notified in advance
- Initial clarification of visuals by using L1
- Routinisation
- Learner as interpreter
- L1 used in order to set the scene for each new unit
- Translation into L1 for class

Production

- Scaffolding: spoken L1 for task/test management
- Scaffolding: written L1 for task/test management
- Scaffolding: overdominant teacher-talk in the foreign language
- Require production of learnt language
- Context-embedded tasks
- Modelling of canonical version
- One thing at a time
- Substantial preparation time
- Intervene as 'teacher'
- Silent partners

PROBLEM-REDUCING STRATEGIES: COMPREHENSION

Teacher-talk in the foreign language designed to reduce problems in comprehension often possesses some or all of the following characteristics:

Teacher initiates, pupils respond

The teacher does most of the talking, and the participation of pupils is largely limited to responding to what the teacher has said, e.g. to the teacher's comprehension checks.

Context-embedded

Language is not expected to do all of the work of communication. It shares the communication load along with non-verbal sounds, facial expression, gesture, other actions, visual props, etc.

Structured

Talk is clearly structured, rather than disorganised, with attention being paid to ensuring smooth transitions from one lesson episode to the next.

Below, at or just above the level of comprehension

Talk is aimed below or at or occasionally just above the level of comprehension, enabling learners to listen fairly comfortably.

Simplified

Talk is not of a native-speaker adult-adult variety, but is simplified in various ways in order to be more accessible to pupils who do not possess native-speaker competence.

To incorporate these problem-reducing strategies into a teaching approach represents a major step forward. From previous research projects conducted in Scotland[1], there is clear evidence that they were not the norm in the late 1970s but that they have been increasingly adopted since then, in order for example to manage everyday classroom routines or to personalise lesson content.

They are strategies of comprehensible input. The teacher structures input in such a way as to make it as easily and comfortably comprehensible as possible, and in the process acts rather like a television newsreader. Both engage in largely unidirectional simplified communication aimed at an audience of more than one. The teacher of course does interact with the class, which the newsreader cannot do with the mass audience, but interaction is limited.

The danger lies in relying on problem-reducing strategies as a total 'package', to the exclusion of other sorts of strategy that challenge learners to participate in a more active fashion.

Each strategy is now exemplified in turn:

REGULAR CHECKS

This may entail interrupting the flow of talk in order to check that the class is following:

- *Vous comprenez?*
- *Oui?*
- *Hein?*
- *OK?*
- *Comment est-ce qu'il s'appelle? ...Vous ne vous en souvenez pas? ...Vous avez oublié? ...*

The class may be taught to signal incomprehension, e.g. by raising a hand. In a related vein, the class may be invited to confirm that it can see the object or drawing to which reference is made, e.g. a small photo that might be difficult to see from the back of the class:

- *Vous voyez?*

The pupils' agreement may be sought that it is appropriate to go on rather than go over the same point once again:

- *Je peux continuer? D'accord?*

FAMILIAR WORDS

If talk is largely restricted to familiar words, structures or phrases, then learners' problems in comprehension will be reduced. In this way they will receive regular exposure to important areas of their syllabus, and their familiarity with it will accordingly be increased.

COURSE-BOOK TOPICS

The number and range of topics that might possibly be included in a foreign-language syllabus at any level is very high. Many of these potential topics cannot adequately be treated in a published course-book, in that they may reflect local or personal considerations that no course-book writer could know about, or they may reflect events that have occurred since the course book was published.

The problem-reducing teacher will tend not to offer pupils the challenge of coping with local, personal or current topics of this sort, but instead will reduce the number and range of possible topics down to those that are dealt with in the course-book. In consequence, topics become things which have a physical existence on printed paper. It is less of a problem for pupils if they are asked to handle only 'given', visible topics of this sort than if they are challenged to integrate them along with the more ephemeral local, personal, current topics into the one coordinated mental network.

Unwillingness to depart from the course-book syllabus is a short-sighted problem-reducing strategy that has rightly been criticised by HM Inspectorate of Schools[2]. It may appear to make things easier for pupils, but in fact it denies them the opportunity to relate much of their personal experience of life to what they are attempting to learn in a foreign language.

LOWER COGNITIVE LEVEL

Talking in the foreign language about topics that are well within learners' intellectual grasp helps them to cope with the demands of comprehension. There will be less need than otherwise for regular interruptions to check if everybody is still understanding.

A consistent finding of the CI Research Project was that the use of the foreign language by teachers tended to be in inverse proportion to the intellectual level of the topic under discussion. If teacher-talk was set at a fairly low intellectual level, e.g. covering factual information on pets, hobbies and pop-music, then it was in the foreign language, but as soon as the intellectual level was raised then L1 began to take over. Normally then the cognitive dimension was 'reduced' in order to allow the flow of foreign language to continue.

IMMEDIATE REPETITION

A common strategy that aids comprehension consists of immediately repeating what has just been said.

The teacher may possibly say the same word or phrase a number of times:

On fait de la ...? ... On fait de la voile ... On fait de la voile ... Vous allez faire de la voile? ...

Le voilà qui regarde les oiseaux ... dans les arbres ... Hein? ... Il regarde les oiseaux ... les oiseaux? ... C'est ça ... Il regarde les oiseaux dans les arbres ...

In many cases, immediate repetition by the teacher is aimed not so much at comprehension as at giving a signal to the class to attend to something:

Asseyez-vous ... Faites attention au fil ... Attention ... Attention ... Tout le monde regardez le micro ... Regardez les caméras ...

Attention, Jean-Luc, lis s'il te plaît ... Lis à la porte

Alternatively, the teacher may repeat what a learner has just said - a very common phenomenon:

- *L : Il ne marche pas ...*
  T : Il ne marche pas? ... Pourquoi? ...

- *L : Qu'est-ce que vous avez fait pendant le weekend, madame?*
  T : Pendant le weekend? ... Oh ...le weekend j'ai ...

Repetition often takes the form of expanding on or structurally improving what a learner has said:

- *T : Comment est-ce qu'il s'appelle? ...*
  L : Tom ...
- *T : Il s'appelle Tom ... Alors ...*

- *L : On peut chercher pour le monstre ...*
  T : On peut chercher le monstre ... Tu as vu le monstre toi?

L : Non ...
T : Non ... Ni moi non plus ...

RECYCLING OF INFORMATION

Input will tend to become more comprehensible if it is offered a number of times rather than once. This strategy differs from 'immediate repetition' in that the relevant item of information is dispersed over a longer stretch of discourse. If a teacher comes back a number of times within a lesson to a particular point, then this is a signal to learners to perceive the point as being of importance, and it also gives them time in which to abstract the essence of the point so as to store it in the proper file in their long-term memory.

It has to be said, however, that this strategy carries its own dangers, since classroom bores and pedagogical over-killers are not unknown! Nonetheless, it will help to ensure that learners are not given too much new information at the one time.

One of the arts of good public speaking, for example, consists of making a very limited number of points in a variety of ways.

PARAPHRASE

Following on from the above point: if comprehension difficulties arise, it will make sense not only to re-cycle information but to do so using a variety of forms. If a point of information is conveyed more than once, using slightly different language each time, then the chances of successful comprehension are likely to be increased and boredom correspondingly diminished:

Vous voyez ses oreilles? ... Hmmm ... Ses oreilles qui sont comme ça ... parce qu'il est timide ... Il a peur ...

Je me suis acheté une couverture chauffante ... Une couverture c'est ce qu'on met sur un lit ... et c'est électrique ...

Après ça j'ai eu un fromage ... J'ai eu du chèvre ... Vous savez ce que c'est qu'une chèvre? ... La chèvre est un petit animal qui ressemble à un mouton ... mais qui a des cornes ...

C'est extra! ... C'est formidable! ... Vous avez de la chance! ...

OTHER ASPECTS OF REDUNDANCY

The preceding three strategies of repetition, recycling and paraphrase are all instances of redundancy which is an important technique for facilitating comprehension, especially in spoken language. Redundancy has been defined as 'the extent to which a message contains more information than is needed for it to be understood'[3].

Everyday spoken language can often be full of elements which, though very important as devices of cohesion and by no means meaningless, may not be central to the basic meaning of an utterance, and hence for present purposes they may be considered as examples of redundancy:

Examples of this wider sort of redundancy are:

- delayers

  T : Oui ... hmmm ... C'est quel numéro?

- contact-establishers or retainers

  T : Alors ... comme vous voyez ... il est blanc et gris

  T : C'est ... si tu veux ... ça ressemble à regarder la télé

- affective starts

  T : Il ne marche pas? ... Oh ... Pourquoi? ...

  T : Le numéro quatre ... Ah non ...

  T : Il a neuf ans? ... Dis donc, c'est vieux, hein?

- interesting and possibly revelatory parenthetical remarks that are not, however, central to the main message

  T : Das fängt mit D an ... Ja, was ist ... (Ach ... Ich habe meine Kreide verloren, Menschenskind!) ... Das fängt mit D an ...

Redundancy serves at least three useful purposes:

First, it allows the listener time in which to focus on and process key (i.e. not redundant) information. When we listen, information comes to us sequentially. If people spoke to us in totally un-redundant telegram language we might have difficulty in coping with the density of information. Generations of learners in fourth and fifth years of secondary school for example have struggled with traditional aural comprehension exams, listening to highly dense, un-redundant written language being spoken aloud rather than to more natural, fluent and redundant spoken language.

Second, it allows the speaker to say much the same thing a number of times and in a variety of ways, i.e. it shows the listener that the speaker really wishes to communicate.

Third, it shows that we are human beings with emotions - who often need time in which to think, to reformulate our thoughts, and who at times cannot altogether stop ourselves from putting in some unnecessary padding and from expressing the Ahs and Ohs of everyday exchange. A languaging machine would be less likely to produce redundant language.

Some teachers have expressed the view that the insertion of redundant elements makes comprehension more rather than less difficult, i.e. is problem-creating rather than problem-reducing. There may be some validity in this view if the redundant elements are mainly expressed in language that pupils do not understand, because in such cases they will not be able to tell if the unknown language is redundant or not - which will create problems for them. If, on the other hand, the redundant elements are known, or their meaning fairly guessable, or if the speaker has some other means of signalling (e.g. by tone of voice, speed of delivery, lack of emphasis) that these particular elements are not of high semantic significance, then it is clear that redundancy has an important role in reducing problems in comprehension, because it allows pupils to concentrate their attention on other, more important bits of language.

L1 COGNATES

The use of L1 cognates - i.e. words or expressions in the foreign language that closely resemble comparable items in L1 - will be likely to help pupils understand what is being said, enabling them to cope with longer stretches of discourse:

> *Henri a deux ans ... Et il est très très timide ... Vous comprenez 'timide'? ... Et il est rond ... complètement rond ... Tandis que Tobias est féroce ...*
>
> *Pendant le weekend ... je me suis acheté une machine à laver électrique ... automatique ...*
>
> *Et pour finir ... un crème caramel ... absolument délicieux ...*

Foreign languages of course vary considerably in the extent to which L1 cognates are possible. French is full of them and has many more than a language such as Japanese, though Japanese does have a number of loan-words from English.

In watching a particular French film for some fifteen minutes, I noted the following:

> *curieux sujet présente publique complexe d'infériorité imprudence précisément interview personnellement studio limiter humiliant conviction incorruptible discussion*

SLOWER, CLEARER TALK

Potential problems in comprehension can be reduced if the foreign language teacher talks more slowly, clearly and deliberately to a class than to a native speaker, another teacher or the foreign language assistant.

Clearly, however, there are dangers in slowing down the rate of talk too much, because intonation and hence meaning might be changed, boredom might set in and pupils might lose the thread of what is being said.

EXAGGERATED INTONATION/EMPHASIS

If classroom talk is delivered in a monotone, input will be less comprehensible than it will be if patterns of intonation and emphasis are observed and indeed possibly slightly accentuated.

A good command of intonation will be all the more important for teachers insofar as one of their besetting problems is that for much of the time they are the only fluent speaker of the language in the class. In consequence they often have to produce utterances that correspond to a variety of characters, rather than to one character alone - and intonation is one of the main keys to characterisation.

Furthermore, intonation and emphasis allow the speaker to maximise the meaning potential of relatively simple utterances, e.g. to signal support, praise, encouragement and perhaps caution through the use of only one or two words intoned in particular ways.

How many different meanings for example might be suggested by *Oui* and *Ja*, variously intoned?

It is difficult to come to terms with intonation and emphasis by looking at texts, but the following examples offer some insights:

- Helping to convey adverbial meaning:

  T : Attention ... Attention ... Doucement, s'il vous plait

- Someone is to complete the phrase:

  T : On fait de la ...? ... On fait de la voile

- Signalling that an offer is genuine:

  T : Il a trois ans ... Alors, comme vous voyez, il est blanc et gris ... Tu veux voir? ...
  P : Oui ...
  T : Toi aussi? ... Oui ...?

- Directing attention to a key word:

  T : Vous êtes tous restés à la maison?
  C : Oui, madame
  T : Et vous avez tous regarde la télé?
  C : Oui ...

STRUCTURALLY SIMPLIFIED LANGUAGE

One feature of parent-to-child talk, relevant to present purposes, is that it tends to be structurally simplified. Utterances tend to be fairly short; there are fewer embedded subordinate clauses; there is a fairly high proportion of imperatives and interrogatives (emphasising the interactive nature of the activity); there is a lack of idiom, for the obvious reason that children would be unlikely to understand much of it; and there is a limited amount of pronominalisation, with nouns tending to be repeated where in conversations among native speakers other than young children these might at times be replaced by pronouns.

Several teachers in the CI Project incorporated certain of these features into their everyday classroom talk, e.g. repetition and limited pronominalisation:

T1 : Vous aimez le football, madame?
T2 : Non, je déteste le football
T1 : Vous aimez la gymnastique?
T2 : Ah oui, j'aime bien la gymnastique
T1 : Vous aimez le golf?
T2 : Non, pas tellement ... Je n'aime pas le golf

This is not to suggest that a problem-reducing teacher tends to talk to the class in the same way as a parent talks to a child. It is true that in both cases they simplify the structure of their talk, but parents are generally far more interactive than problem-reducing teachers, and in their interactions parents often follow what their children have initiated. Recent research[4] confirms just how active, creative and initiating even very young children can be, long before they have reached the one-word stage.

In the problem-reducing class then, the teacher's simplified language may have some features in common with that of a parent talking with a child, but the nature of the interaction will be significantly different, since in the problem-reducing classroom there is relatively little initiation by pupils.

MIME, EXPRESSION, GESTURE

In talk that is related to objects, activities or emotions, the use of mime, facial expression and gesture can often signal meaning, possibly in order to reinforce what is being expressed verbally. This is an extremely useful strategy for foreign language teachers in that it reduces the need for recourse to L1.

In the examples given below, where ... *** ... appears, this signals a supportive mime or gesture:

*Mais maintenant une fois que je mets ... *** ... la couverture chauffante .. Pssssst! ... *** ... Dans le lit ... *** ... Vous comprenez? ... Tous les deux ...*

*La chèvre est un petit animal qui ressemble à un mouton ... mais qui a des cornes ... *** ...*

*Alors, tu regardes le linge ... qui fait des tours comme ça ... *** ... et puis tu sors le linge ... *** ... et c'est propre*

RANGE OF SENSORY FOCUS

'Varying the stimulus' is a pedagogical skill of widely acknowledged worth. Normally, learners will attend better to a lesson if a range of senses are involved, provided that the variety is not so great that it becomes confusing. Some activities for example may give priority to the eyes (e.g. by means of text, visuals, concrete props, mime), others may favour the ears (e.g. listening to a tape), others may allow scope for physical actions including touch, others may consist mainly of talk.

For two main reasons it is normally a good idea to vary the stimulus in this way within a lesson.

First, variation often helps learners to sustain their attention. If a lesson consisted of only one activity largely involving only one sense, then many learners would find it difficult to retain their interest.

Second, a concept, such as an item of vocabulary, a grammatical structure or a language function, is likely to be better and more easily understood if it is approached from a variety of angles rather than from one angle alone.

News programmes on TV such as 'News at Ten' make deliberate use of stimulus variation as a means of facilitating comprehension - e.g. two presenters in the studio, interviews out in the field, very clear delineation of news items, some information intended for the eye and other information intended for the ear.

VARIETY OF MODELS

Comprehension may be greatly facilitated if the class is exposed to a number of reasonably fluent speakers interacting with each other, rather than to one teacher alone.

Clearly, this is possible through audio and video-recordings and television, but it is also possible through team-teaching, sometimes called cooperative teaching. In this, each participant may possibly play one role only, which in itself is likely to be less confusing than if the one teacher were to play all possible roles.

The foreign-language assistant has an obvious part to play, but so does the learning support teacher (sometimes still called the 'remedial' teacher) or indeed any other teacher, learner or visitor who happens to come into the classroom. In some cases they will not be foreign-language specialists, but this can be exploited to advantage, since they may at times be obliged to use their ingenuity in order to communicate, which might prove a useful source of ideas for pupils.

Variety of models is important not only as a means of facilitating comprehensible input. If learners are to gain an awareness of the social uses of language, then progress is bound to be limited if they are exposed to only one foreign language model, their class teacher. Much better if they are confronted by various foreign language models interacting in a variety of social contexts.

The strategy of offering learners a variety of models presupposes of course a commitment by foreign language teachers to communication with colleagues as well as with learners.

CLARITY OF DISCOURSE MARKERS

Back to 'News at Ten' again, where it is normal practice for the presenters to begin with a brief statement of the main points of the programme as a whole. This enables viewers to build up an advance picture of what the programme is going to be about, which helps with the process of prediction. The technique of segmentation then takes each item in turn, up to the commercial break, immediately before which there is a brief statement of what will come after the break. At the end there is a brief summary, possibly followed by a humorous comment (variation of mood).

These techniques are deliberately employed in order to enable the viewer to obtain the maximum of comprehensible input with the minimum of misunderstanding. They are all the more necessary since of course viewers cannot interact with the newscasters.

No teacher has the time or resources to engage in planning procedures at a comparable level of detail. Nonetheless, those favouring a problem-reducing approach often work along lines similar to those of the newsreaders, albeit in a more rough and ready fashion. The main objectives and segments of the lesson are given at the start, each is then taken in turn, and a summary is given at the end. Even a simple lesson structure such as this can offer pupils an opportunity not only to organise their own thinking in the light of expectations created by the teacher, because they have been given a rough idea of what is to come, but also to gain more confidence and security as a result.

Thus far, coherence of discourse has been the main focus, but cohesion is also important.

In lessons that contain a number of different segments it is important to signal clearly when a segment is beginning and ending. Learners must understand the foreign language phrases that are used for this purpose. Otherwise it can be deceptively easy for a teacher to sweep on with great enthusiasm to (say) Segment 6, leaving most of the class suffering a 'décalage' effect - some of them trailing mentally behind on Segment 5, others on Segment 4.

It will be difficult for learners to cope with larger stretches of foreign language discourse unless they are well in command of elementary discourse markers such as: *maintenant on va, d'abord, alors, et puis, mais, après ça*, and *pour finir*:

> *Bon, alors aujourd'hui on va parler des sports ... On va parler des passetemps ... D'accord? ... Alors, sortez vos cahiers, s'il vous plaît ... Et vous allez noter ce qu'on dit ... Alors NOM, vous pouvez marquer simplement Mme X ... Et puis le sport ou le passetemps ... et mon opinion ...*

KEY VOCABULARY AND STRUCTURE, NOTIFIED IN ADVANCE

When working with most kinds of text, spoken or written, authentic in whole or in part, learners will encounter words they do not know. A problem-reducing teacher may pre-empt the problem by teaching the key vocabulary and structures in advance, before the text is encountered - a strategy well-known to viewers of *Téléjournal*. Accordingly, when pupils come to the text the new elements are not entirely new, and they engage in an act of recognition rather than one of inference. They are not asked to work out new meanings from clues provided by the text or context. Once the text has been covered, for whatever purpose, the key vocabulary may be summarised and learnt, possibly at home.

SIMPLE TASKS, NOTIFIED IN ADVANCE

Input will be made more comprehensible if beforehand the teacher suggests a simple task related to what is to come. This will give learners a purpose in listening, which will help with gist extraction. Comprehension is a highly selective process, and an advance task helps define the criteria for selection.

There may be many different sorts of simple advance task. To take only a few based on listening to an audio-cassette: informing the class that they are to listen to the cassette in order to be able to

- state what sort of person X is
- state what X ordered in the shop
- draw a map so as to reconstruct the journey that was talked about
- leave a written note for a friend who did not hear the broadcast of a weather report, so that they will know what to wear during tomorrow's outing.

INITIAL CLARIFICATION OF VISUALS BY USING L1

When using flashcards, filmstrips or other visuals the problem-reducing teacher will tend to discuss in L1 the meaning of the visuals before engaging in foreign language activity based on them. Learners are not expected to infer the possible meaning from the visuals by listening carefully to what the teacher says about them in the foreign language.

ROUTINISATION

Input in teacher-talk will tend to be more comprehensible if for the most part it runs along predictable lines.

If for example the teacher is playing the role of a waitress in a restaurant, customers consulting the menu and placing their orders would expect to receive what they ordered. They would not expect the waitress to bring something that had not been ordered, nor to drop the tray of food, nor to inform them that there was a dead rat in the kitchen, nor to short-change them.

Situations will be more accurately interpreted if participants act in conformity with a commonsense view of their particular role.

The ability to cope with unpredictability in action as well as in language is of course extremely important, but if we were to assume that everything in life was going to be unpredictable, as in Monty Python or the Goon Show, then we would not be able to cope with it.

Comprehensible input in the classroom then vitally depends on establishing a wide range of clearly understood foreign language routines, enabling learners increasingly to take them for granted so as to devote the maximum amount of attention to making inferences about those parts that in fact turn out to be different from what was expected.

LEARNER AS INTERPRETER

In order to help a learner who has a comprehension problem, it may at times be appropriate to invite another member of the class to act as interpreter:

T : *Tu vas en France cette année?*
P1 : *Eh ... Je ne comprends pas.*
T : *Bon, alors ... Qu'est-ce que je lui demande? ... Tu vas en France cette année? .... Tu interprètes, Pascal ...*
P2 : *Are you going to France this year?*
T : *Tu vas en France cette année?*
P1 : *A Carnac ...*

This strategy offers the advantage that it enables the teacher to retain the role of foreign-language speaker, with no concessions to L1, throughout a particular activity.

L1 USED IN ORDER TO SET THE SCENE FOR EACH NEW UNIT

Most pupils' native language is far superior to their foreign language as an instrument of thought and communication. It would be strange if this instrument were never to be put at the disposal of learning a foreign language, and furthermore it would be naive to expect that in school conditions in the UK pupils could be expected to develop two totally separate language systems, one in L1 and the other in the foreign language. In any case, to do so would be educationally unsound, because one of the educational aims of foreign language learning must surely be to gain insight into the nature and purposes of language, and this can be achieved by means of contrasting one language with the other.

The question then is not so much whether the native language should be used, but rather when and for what purposes.

Teachers favouring a problem-reducing approach will tend to favour the use of the native language early in each unit of work, in order to establish a scenario for the unit. Once this has been achieved, they can then devote more time to using the foreign language.

The scenario for the unit might be established in L1 by discussing with pupils:

- the background context, e.g. fishing on the north coast of Brittany
- the functional objectives of the unit
- the English equivalents of certain key functions, structures or vocabulary that are to figure prominently in the unit.

Whilst all of these can be justified, there can be little doubt that many teachers still find it only too easy to over-use the native language for these purposes. The CI Research Project suggests strongly that all pupils in mixed-ability classes are capable of understanding more in the foreign language than their teachers might sometimes expect, so caution should be exercised in operating this particular problem-reducing strategy on a large scale.

Other approaches, more geared to problem-creation, favour the use of the foreign language from the very start of each unit, with the native language held in reserve as a fall-back, to be used only if major problems arise.

TRANSLATION INTO L1 FOR CLASS

If all other strategies fail or if for once the inspiration is not at its usual high level, the problem-reducing teacher may offer a quick translation of a word or phrase into L1, provided that this does not distract from learners' primary attention to the flow of foreign language:

C'est ça ... *Il regarde les oiseaux dans les arbres* ... *Ça vous donne le mal de mer* ... *Makes you feel sea-sick* ... (and then on in fluent French).

Given the wide range of alternative problem-reducing strategies, however, this particular one should arguably be used sparingly in a communicative approach.

PROBLEM-REDUCING STRATEGIES: PRODUCTION

This section presents a range of strategies that might be employed in order to 'reduce' learners' problems in oral production.

Common to most of the strategies are the following features:

Teacher control

The teacher is in control of the parameters for pupil talk. Pupils may be allowed some choice, in what to say, but only within given, narrow parameters.

Shallow-end approach

A shallow-end to deep-end approach is favoured within units of work, i.e. a large amount of basic communication precedes a more ambitious 'pay-off' activity.

Pre-emption of problems

The teacher assumes that certain learner problems can be anticipated and pre-empted in advance of a task, hence the decisive role of the teacher in establishing the parameters for the task and in determining how, when, how quickly and with whom progression will take place from the shallow to the deep end.

Conscious learning and advance monitoring

Activities are presented to learners in such a way as to require them to draw consciously on what they have recently learnt consciously within the current unit of work. Attention is directed to explicit knowledge and skills, and not to intuitions or subconscious associations. They are being trained to consciously monitor their oral production in advance of attempting the actual activity, in order to filter out any potential impurities that might cause an obstruction during the attempt to convey meaning.

Each strategy is now discussed in turn.

SCAFFOLDING: SPOKEN L1 FOR TASK/TEST MANAGEMENT

It is likely that difficulties in speaking will be reduced if L1 is used for task management - before the activity in order to set it up, during the activity in order to monitor and control it, and after the activity in order to discuss and evaluate performance. It is not unreasonable to assume that if L1 is used for these purposes, then during the preparation phase for example the class will have a good chance of understanding exactly what the task involves, will be able to ask their own clarificatory questions about it, make their own suggestions on how it should be organised, state their own problems beforehand, and will be able to get into the task more quickly than they would if the task were to be set up by means of the foreign language.

It should be pointed out, however, that if L1 is used for task management in the way described, then pupils' perception of the communicative force of the foreign language may be greatly diminished, and they will be starved of a regular opportunity to comprehend many important everyday functional meanings expressed in the foreign language. It should also be pointed out that in the CI research project the issue of L1 or the foreign language for task management was investigated, and it was established that all pupils in the S1 mixed ability classes in which the investigation took place felt as comfortable with task management in the foreign language as in L1.

In consequence, it is reasonable to conclude that the strategy of L1 for task management should be used sparingly, if at all.

SCAFFOLDING: WRITTEN L1 FOR TASK/TEST MANAGEMENT

Scaffolding also occurs when L1, rather than the foreign language, is used in task-sheets or assessment-sheets in order to:

- set the scene for a task
- outline the nature of a task
- suggest ideas that pupils might use when performing the task.

The intention clearly is to allow pupils to get into the task of communication (in the foreign language) as quickly as possible, and with the least confusion, on the assumption that if the scenario were outlined in the foreign language, then pupils might not understand what they were to do, with the consequence that they might have to spend so much time learning what the task was about that they would have little time in which to perform the task.

This assumption is firmly embedded in the assessment procedures for Standard Grade and GCSE, in both of which foreign-language tasks are frequently 'scaffolded' in English. As a direct consequence, the large body of material produced commercially and by other means in response to the needs of these two major examinations, contains a huge amount of English for the purpose of 'scaffolding' various sorts of foreign-language task.

It is regrettable that this should have happened. In many cases the English used in order to scaffold a foreign-language task is lexically and structurally simpler than the foreign-language texts on which the task is based.

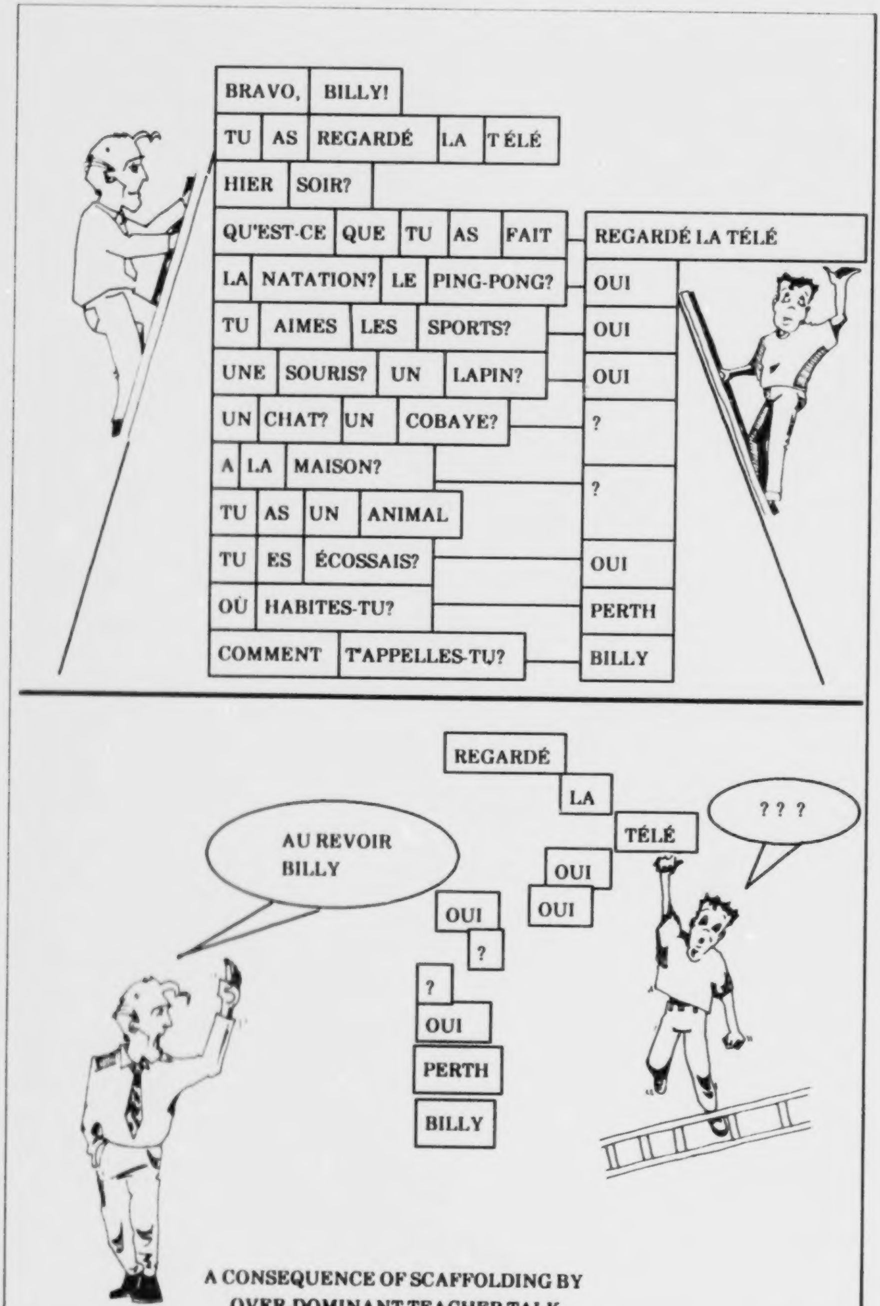
This approach has the added disadvantage that it encourages pupils to think in English about what they are to do, when the purpose should surely be to help them formulate their thoughts in the foreign language. Most pupils retain more easily what they have read than what they have heard (for evidence of this, see the final chapter). In consequence, the more appropriate strategy might have been to expose pupils to written task scenarios in the foreign language, supported by teacher-class discussion in the foreign language about the nature of the task, with brief recursions into spoken but not written L1 as further back up, but only if necessary.

In short then, this particular problem-reducing strategy is being over-prescribed at present, and is likely to have the effect of increasing the amount of English used in foreign-language classrooms.

SCAFFOLDING: OVERDOMINANT TEACHER-TALK IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE

In everyday classroom interaction, whether with the whole class or with a smaller group, a common foreign-language strategy used by teachers in the CI project was 'scaffolding'. This consists of teacher and learner together constructing a complete utterance, with the teacher doing most of the work. In other words, the learner's limited contribution is 'scaffolded' by a more substantial contribution from the teacher, as in the example below:

T : *Et le meilleur programme pour toi c'était ...?*
L1 : *Eastenders ...*



A CONSEQUENCE OF SCAFFOLDING BY OVER-DOMINANT TEACHER TALK

T : *Bon alors ... Eastenders ... Tu aimes ça, Paul?*
L2 : (indecipherable)
T : *Non? ... Oui? ... Quelquefois? ... Jamais? ...*
L2 : *Oui*

In the example of scaffolding given above, the use of *c'était* ... allows the learner to complete the utterance by saying one word. In the teacher's final utterance four possibilities have been offered, and all that the learner need do is choose one of them as an answer. We do not know, however, if the learner fully understands the meanings of the options offered.

Further examples of scaffolding are:

T : *Vendredi soir je suis rentrée à la maison et j'ai ...?*
L : *... regardé la télé ..*
T : *Et j'ai regardé la télé ...*

- *T* : *Quel âge a-t-il? .. Un an? .. Deux ans? .. Trois ans?*
L : *Neuf ans ...*

- *T* : *Un sandwich? ... Et quelle sorte de sandwich?*
...Un sandwich fromage? ... Un sandwich jambon?
...Un sandwich frites? ... Miam Miam ...
L : *Egg and tomato.*

This last example shows that in 'scaffolding' it may be possible to take a horse to water, but ...! On the other hand, the learner does show a refreshing intention to convey real information.

'Scaffolding' is not just a problem-reducing technique for classrooms. It is also widely used in cinema and in ordinary life.

Let us consider a conversation from the film *La Dentellière*. The action takes place in a small town on the Normandy coast. The two participants are François, an intellectual student, and Béatrice who works in a hairdressing salon in Paris. They meet by chance on the terrasse of a café and the conversation represents their first encounter:

- *Beau temps pour manger des glaces*
- *Oui*
- *Vous êtes en vacances?*
- *Oui*
- *Vous n'allez pas à la plage?*
- *Non*
- *Vous n'aimez pas?*
- ...
- *A cette heure c'est la fourmillière ... la plage ... il faut aller tôt le matin ... c'est complètement vide ... c'est la première fois que vous venez à Cabourg?*
- *Oui*

- *Moi je passe mes vacances dans ce trou depuis mon enfance, hélas*
- *C'est joli pourtant*
- *Joli ... oui, c'est vrai .... Cabourg, perle de la côte normande ... sa digue de 1800 metres ... et ses jolis jardins aux parterres admirables couverts de fleurs ... son avenue de la mer ... son Grand Hôtel avec sa chambre de Marcel Proust ... sa spécialité de carmel mou ... son tennis club ... son golf à dix-huit trous ... pour les moins fortunés son golf à miniature ... son cercle hippique ... son marchand de cycles ... sa poste ... son promenade des Anglais ... son boulevard des Belges ... et puis surtout son ennui monumental.*
- *Pourquoi vous revenez alors?*
- *Pour ses glaces au chocolat ... vous en voulez une autre?*
- *Non, non merci*
- *Je m'appelle François Béligné ... je fais de brillants études de lettres à Paris ... et vous? ... vous vous appelez comment?*

François is 'scaffolding' the conversation in order to establish contact with Béatrice. By nature, Béatrice is not a talkative person, but it is significant that François' 'scaffolding' tactics force her to say less than she might otherwise have said, because they reinforce his feelings of condescending superiority on the issues that he has chosen to talk about - a salutory point for L2 classrooms. Indeed, without giving too much away, it can be stated that the film itself provides a sad reflection on what happens in an interpersonal relationship in which one person cannot fit into the framework that the other cannot help wanting to scaffold.

Both in classrooms and in ordinary life, scaffolded structures may be helpful for a while, but their real purpose is to support something that should subsequently stand on its own.

REQUIRE PRODUCTION OF LEARNT LANGUAGE

Speaking tasks will be easier if they require the production of language with which learners are already familiar, rather than if they are taken into areas with which their existing language resource cannot fully cope.

A common instance of this strategy is to go over with the class the list of items, e.g. words, phrases, grammar points, functions, notions, that they will use during a subsequent communicative speaking activity. Pupils may possibly be instructed to incorporate all of these into their activity, or they may be invited to use them as a resource on which they may selectively draw in their own way and for their own purposes. In both cases, however, they are being asked to consciously produce language that is already known to them.

CONTEXT-EMBEDDED TASKS

It will be likely to be easier for learners if they are allowed to communicate by non-linguistic as well as by linguistic means, making what use they can of visual backcloth, props, sound effects, movement to and fro, declamatory gesture, facial expression, body contact and accompanying body action.

Certain kinds of task - particularly those involving everyday transactions - almost require this kind of support if they are to be perceived as realistic and if the language used by learners is to correspond to real-life requirements.

Many lessons have been observed, however, in which conversations that in real life would normally be embedded in the sort of context described above have in fact been conducted as though in a contextual vacuum, with minimal movement and no visual support. What in real life might be a relatively straightforward speaking activity becomes much more difficult in the classroom.

The present problem-reducing strategy then consists of setting up in the classroom a sample of those contextual props that exist in real life outside.

In context-embedded tasks of this sort, language will tend to contain the following features:

- it will not do all of the work of communication, since gesture, action, etc will share the load
- as in real life, language may be sporadic rather than continuous.

Also, it may contain a number of deictic expressions, e.g. *Ça, s'il te plait* and *Die da, bitte!* which can easily be understood in a context in which participants may use their eyes as well as their ears in order to receive information. Deictic expressions in context-embedded activities have an added use for foreign-language learners in that if a desired item of vocabulary is not known the learner may on occasion simply be able to point and say words such as the ones already quoted, or many others such as *Celui-ci* or *Das!*

MODELLING OF CANONICAL VERSION

Yet another problem-reducing strategy consists of modelling a master version of performance before the class as a whole makes the attempt.

This might be achieved by interacting with a colleague or with the foreign conversation assistant or with senior pupils or with a few selected pupils from the class itself. The task is acted out at the front of the class and then one or more groups of pupils are asked to attempt the task in front of the whole class, allowing the teacher to diagnose and pre-empt immediate difficulties that had not been anticipated.

ONE THING AT A TIME

The CI research project revealed that participating teachers tended to lead up to communication tasks by devoting large amounts of time to the thorough preparation of their component elements one at a time, based mainly on flashcards or worksheets for use in whole-class, group or paired activity.

Possibly it was assumed that communicating 'for real' in speech is a complex activity which if introduced too early in a unit may have a demoralising effect on many if not all learners by making demands far beyond their resources.

In the following example, two pupils are each operating largely one function at a time:

P1 : Tu aimes le football?
P2 : Non, je déteste le football
P1 : Tu aimes le tennis?
P2 : Oui ... Tu aimes le rugby?
P1 : Oui
P2 : Tu aimes la musique pop?
P1 : Oui, je de ... j'adore la musique pop
P2 : Tu aimes le ping-pong?
P1 : Oui
P2 : Eh ... tu aimes la musique classique?
P1 : Non, je déteste le musique classique
P2 : Tu aimes la hockey?
P1 : Je déteste le hockey

In the conversation given above it would be most unfair to deny that the two pupils were communicating with each other, but their discourse is a good example of function-speak. The activity was certainly interactive, allowing each pupil to initiate as well as to respond; it was functional in its orientation; and it allowed a (minimal) amount of choice in what to say. Learner-talk, however, was narrowed down to three verbs in the *je* and *tu* forms, when in reality the area of likes and dislikes can of course be covered by a much wider structural-lexical range.

The activity was intended to allow learners to consolidate certain basic communicative functions in isolation or in minimal combinations before using them in more open, less predictable exchange.

Concentrating on one thing at a time is one way of reducing the complexity of real communication. There is no doubt that many teachers think this is a good thing to do, e.g.

- one grammar point at a time
- one situation at a time
- one language function at a time
- one course-book unit at a time

The approach does have the merit of focusing attention, but the difficulty lies in incorporating elements that have been learnt one at a time into a more complex, dynamic system. Yet, it is a dynamic system that pupils have to operate if they are to communicate for real at the level of basic interpersonal communication.

A problem-creating teacher would adopt a different strategy, by starting with the dynamic system rather than reducing it down to individual component elements. From the start of each unit of work, as far as possible, pupils would be asked to cope with tasks in which a range of language functions interacted dynamically with each other. Their first attempt at any such task might not be particularly successful, but during the course of the unit their fluency and accuracy in regard to this range would gradually improve.

When pupils are learning **about** the language, e.g. about its grammatical structure, it may at times make good sense to focus on one thing at a time. When on the other hand they are attempting to communicate, it is counter-productive to reduce a task down to one or two functions at a time.

SUBSTANTIAL PREPARATION TIME

A related problem-reducing strategy consists of giving a communication task to the class without launching them immediately on it. Instead, time is allowed for groups to prepare: deciding on roles, thinking of what to say and possibly helping one another with ideas. In such circumstances the actual performance of the task, if and when it actually takes place, will run more smoothly with fewer breakdowns than otherwise.

INTERVENE AS 'TEACHER'

Problems of oral communication in simulations and role-plays will be reduced if the teacher is prepared to intervene, to stop the action in order to bring things together, to consolidate basic points, and then to allow the activity to continue.

Considerable skill will be required, however, if this is to be done effectively, because in principle the fragile version of reality created for simulations or role-plays should not be momentarily destroyed by pedagogical intervention. It will accordingly be important to ensure that any such intervention consists of a brief self-contained segment, bounded by the clearest possible discourse-markers. Otherwise learners will not know for example whether they are in a classroom (intervention segment) or in the foreign country (simulation or role-play); they will not know whether their teacher is playing a role or is acting as teacher; and the convention of 'suspension of disbelief' that is necessary to sustain any simulation or role-play with maximum effectiveness will be compromised. Nonetheless, if the interventions can be made quickly, then they may serve the purpose of keeping the activity going rather than allowing it to break down in increasing confusion.

SILENT PERIODS

The ultimate strategy of simplified production is to allow learners to say nothing at all if they so wish. Many authorities on foreign-language learning in fact argue strongly for a 'silent period' (or possibly for a number of 'silent periods'), during which learners will know that there is no pressure to speak unless they wish to, and in consequence concentration can be exclusively focused on the development of comprehension skills.

One possible way of implementing this strategy in class would be to offer a range of group activities, with some tasks making no demands on speaking, and to allow pupils to make their own choice. It is probably true of most foreign-language learners that at times they understandably wish to concentrate on the assimilation of new material, and at other times, when material has been well enough assimilated, they feel ready and willing to 'produce'.

PROBLEM- REDUCING STRATEGIES: SOME RESERVATIONS

Problem-reducing strategies offer a good chance of introducing classroom activity in which the foreign language is fairly extensively used, without placing impossible demands on learners. There are grounds for believing, however, that the application of these strategies will of itself in many cases not be sufficient to achieve desired outcomes within an acceptable time-scale.

PR teacher does too much

Put simply, the problem-reducing teacher does too much of the work - simplifying matters to the extent that they hardly ask learners to solve problems at all. Instead, problem solutions have already been formulated by the teacher and 'lent' to learners for the purpose of doing an activity. Two members of the APU[5] express well the danger inherent in a problem-reducing approach:

> *Selecting texts for their own inherent interest should be a guiding principle in the provision of reading materials. Texts which are adapted to pupils' supposed level of competence run the risk of underestimating the degree of understanding of which many of them are capable.*

Turning to the actual field, evidence from the CI project indicates that among the many good things that were noted, the following more cautionary features were also evident:

In reception

There was a tendency for teachers to use much the same level of classroom and personal language with classes at the end of second year as with classes at the end of first year. First-year pupils were certainly able to accept a free flow of foreign language from the teacher, but tests of their ability to 'pick up' for themselves the meaning of those language items that were widely used in class without being formally taught in their course-book up to that point suggest that many had acquired a general if somewhat vague functional comprehension but were unclear about precise meaning. A phrase such as *Tu te mets là, s'il te plaît* might be understood functionally as *Sit over there* but its constituent structural elements even after extensive exposure would not be understood.

In production

There was a tendency to produce holophrases with some degree of variation but not to be able to manipulate language creatively in accordance with a system of internalised rules. There was much evidence of ingenuity, but this tended to consist of using one phrase for a variety of different meanings, i.e. making inventive use of a limited resource. The problem-reducing approach had not given them a particularly rich or creative resource on which to draw in the first place.

A learning-support view

A perceptive learning-support teacher observed a lesson taught almost exclusively in the foreign language by an excellent teacher making good use of many of these problem-reducing strategies, and concluded that despite its merits the approach was running counter to the needs of her pupils in the class, in that it was not engaging them actively enough.

Fossilisation

A consequence of such an approach, even though it may justifiably be called communicative, is that learners may reach a plateau in their performance, a feature that technically is called 'fossilisation'. It is true that a plateau-effect is something that we all experience in many aspects of our lives, e.g. in our work, in our relationships with people and in sporting performance. It is also true, however, that foreign or second language users may reach a plateau and never get beyond it even when they have been living for twenty years in a country in which the foreign or second language is spoken.

In order to develop a more creative competence, it will be necessary to draw not only on the problem-reducing strategies that have been discussed thus far, but also on other sorts of strategy which are discussed in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

TEACHERS : PROBLEM-CREATING STRATEGIES

Whereas a problem-reducing teacher will simplify communication problems for pupils so that they can cope with them by exploiting their existing level of competence, a problem-creating teacher will tend to offer them the challenge of tasks that are somewhat beyond them. An assumption underlying the problem-creating approach is that it will not only be more interesting and motivating but also that it will encourage pupils to extend their competence in the language.

Although HM Inspectors of Schools do not use the term 'problem-creating', they are clearly in favour of this approach. In a recent report[1] they describe good teachers as being ...

- ... adventurous (para 40)
- ... uncondescending (page 40)
- ... setting high expectations for pupils (para 73).

...which are among the essential characteristics of a problem-creating teacher.

At the heart of a problem-creating approach lies the notion of challenging pupils to cope with extended discourse, as opposed to very short passages, c.f. the Assessment of Performance Unit report on 13-year-olds[2]:

> *Pupils should have the opportunity to tackle longer texts in reading and listening ... Longer texts, with their greater range of complexity of language, exploit a wider range of skills and competencies.*

A range of problem-creating strategies are listed below. Although some are grouped under comprehension and others under production, this is only for convenience, since most could be discussed under both headings.

Comprehension

- **Using the foreign language, spoken and written, for task specification and task management**
- **Challenging pupils to draw on personal experience by going beyond the course-book**
- **Variation in rate of delivery**
- **Context-reduced language, spoken and written**
- **Unpredictable talk**

- Raising the cognitive level
- Setting precise tasks
- Setting no tasks

Production

- Encouraging the expression of personal meaning
- Initial failure
- Refusal of premature help
- Negative feedback
- Setting precise tasks, with limited scaffolding
- Simulation
- Articulation of activity
- Communicative transformations
- Multi-meaning mode
- Cultivation of alter-egos
- Curriculum planning by learners

At times learners will need to draw not only on cognitive ability in order to cope with these demands but also on much more general and accessible characteristics such as wit, quick-thinking, imagination and general 'savvy'.

It is not suggested that these strategies should be used to the exclusion of problem-reducing strategies. At times we need to breathe in, at other times we need to breathe out.

PROBLEM-CREATING STRATEGIES: COMPREHENSION

In many ways the strategies in this section consist of problem-reducing strategies as previously discussed, but with certain support withdrawn in the interest of giving learners more opportunity to construct meanings for themselves.

Take for example the problem-reducing strategy of 'structurally simplified language' which had something (though not all that much) in common with the way in which parents talk to children. The problem-creating teacher recognises however that, whilst this strategy has considerable value for all foreign-language learners and reflects the natural process of adaptation to the other person that is a characteristic of successful communication, the aim must be to help them move away from 'structurally simplified language' and that in any case secondary school learners of age twelve and upwards are not very young children.

To enable them to move beyond 'structurally simplified language' will require exposure to non-concessionary talk in which teachers and/or native speaker models do not talk slowly, do not talk particularly loudly or with particular clarity, do not restrict themselves to simple clauses, do not exaggerate patterns of intonation, do not repeat everything that the learner says and do not make extensive use of visible contextual cues.

Each problem-creating strategy is now discussed in turn:

USING THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE, SPOKEN AND WRITTEN, FOR TASK SPECIFICATION AND TASK MANAGEMENT

There is little doubt that using the foreign language, as opposed to L1, for these purposes will add to pupils' problems. The justification is that understanding a task specification in a foreign language itself constitutes a concrete, specific, practical problem which pupils must solve if they are to approach the main task. It offers two problems for the price of one: coming to terms with the task specification and then with the task itself.

If research were to produce clear evidence that the imposition of this double task was an impossible burden on pupils, then of course it would be necessary to think again, but so far as I am aware there are no research findings pointing in this direction. The CI project indicated that pupils in mixed classes could cope with the double task, and HM Inspectorate of Schools regularly identify this strategy as one of the hallmarks of the good practice which they wish to encourage. In addition they rightly draw attention to the dangers of under-challenging pupils of all aptitudes, e.g. by over-use of the native language, which can have negative effects not only on their cognitive development but also on their attitudes and motivations. Task specification in the foreign language is one possible means of avoiding this danger.

In everyday spoken interaction, not every comprehension activity will be accompanied by a set task, but many will:

> *... Bon, alors aujourd'hui on va parler des sports ... Hein? ... On va parler des passetemps ... D'accord? ... Alors, sortez vos cahiers, s'il vous plaît ... Sortez vos cahiers ... Et vous copiez ça ... Copiez ... NOM ... PASSETEMPS ... OPINION ... Et mademoiselle et moi, on va parler ... On va parler de nos sports ... de nos passetemps ... de nos opinions ... Hein? ... Et vous allez noter ce qu'on dit ... Alors NOM, vous pouvez marquer simplement Mme () ... Et puis le sport ou le passetemps et mon opinion ...si c'est 'bien' ... c'est 'pas mal' ... c'est 'intéressant' ... et cetera ... Hein? ...*

On a problem-creating approach the teacher will tend to use the foreign language not only as a means of specifying task requirements in advance but also during a task if intervention is called for in order to offer support ...

> *Ja ... aber Moment mal, Kinder ... Bitte ... Hört zu ... Hier spricht man Deutsch ... nicht Englisch ... Also kein einziges Wort auf Englisch ... Verstanden? ... Also, wer hat Probleme? ... Niemand? ... Gut ... Weiter, bitte.*

... and also in order to lead discussion of performance, once a task has been completed:

> *Ja ... Vielen Dank ... Das war gut ... Also, was meint ihr, die anderen? ... Seid ihr derselben Meinung? ... Habt ihr Vorschläge? ... Wer hätte was anderes gesagt, zum Beispiel? ...*

Recently, I observed a student-teacher taking a first-year mixed German class in a Scottish comprehensive school. What a pleasure it was all round, to the pupils as well as to the observer and the teacher, to be part of a completely monolingual foreign-language experience in which pupils showed no anxiety and had little if any difficulty in coping with the following phrases (which are only a small sample of what the student-teacher said):

> *Ich bin sehr schlecht im Zeichnen ... Das war schwer ... Alison, neben Julie bitte ... Prima, ja ... Dieses Blatt, hier ... Wir wollen das kurz lesen ... Seid ihr alle fertig? ... Was möchtest du? ... Kannst du mich noch mal fragen? ... Was ist das denn, ein 'pen' ? ... Welches Datum ist denn heute? ... Wenn ihr Fragen habt, haltet die Hand hoch ... Er ist ein kleiner Bösewicht ... Ich glaube, ich habe euch was nicht gesagt ... Du sagst ... und dann sagst du ... Das sind die Sekunden, und das sind die Minuten .. Was denn? ... Könnt ihr jetzt aufhören? ... Wir machen es alle mit der Klasse zusammen ... Das war ganz prima. So, Nummer drei ... Das war sehr dumm! ... Könnt ihr rechts unten gucken? ... Kannst du das auf Deutsch sagen? ... Das war ganz gemein von mir ... Das nächste ... Hat niemand Nummer drei gemacht? ... Dorothy, du kannst es aber versuchen ... Weißt du, wie man es auf Deutsch sagt? ... Das ist einfach ... Ich glaube, wir müssen mal 'die Zeit' üben ... Ich glaube, ihr habt ganz große Probleme ... Nein, helft ihr nicht, sie muß es allein machen ... Hier, die anderen? ... Ihr könnt gehen, tschüs! ...*

How much more convincing this is than the following verbatim extract from another lesson, this time with a French class, in which problem-reducing strategies abound:

> *We've done the presentation and the flashcards ...* Alors ... *Now we're going to do a little role-play ... Who'll come to the front to do the role-play with me? ... Jane please,* viens ici, s'il te plaît ... *(Then the role-play took place, which was largely a reproduction of a course-book dialogue) ... Good, well done,* très bien ... *Who else would like to volunteer now?* ... Des volontaires, s'il vous plaît ...

CHALLENGING PUPILS TO DRAW ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

A problem-creating teacher will wish to draw on a variety of sources in addition to a course-book, if indeed a course-book is used.

A striking characteristic of several teachers in the CI project was their commitment to talking well beyond the course-book syllabus which their classes had encountered up to that point. The teachers were not altogether departing from the syllabus, because quite often they were anticipating points which they knew cropped up later in the course-book. At the time, however, by deliberately exposing their pupils to a considerably wider range of spoken language than appeared in the course-books, they were offering their pupils a welcome challenge in comprehension, not to mention stimulating their interest.

Often they talked about topics that they knew were within the everyday experience of their classes, which meant that pupils could draw on this experience in order to infer what the teacher was meaning when talking in the foreign language, and conversely they could listen carefully to the foreign language in order to see if something in it struck a chord in their experience.

A widely-adopted and successful problem-reducing strategy is to organise a range of varied activities round one particular topic, i.e. approaching the topic from a number of different angles, e.g. flashcards, worksheets, drama, cassette ... A problem-creating teacher on the other hand will command additional dimensions of variation, in particular variation of content, c.f. the aforementioned report by HM Inspectors of Schools:

> *Pupils may identify variety with content rather than merely activity and, therefore, gain a more obvious sense of variety in sciences and humanities from changes of topics.*

Variety of content in texts for reading and listening is of central importance in this respect, but so also is variety of simple topics for group-talk, including those derived from the everyday life-experience of pupils, embracing *Neighbours*, *007*, *Dallas* and *Dynasty*. These can be a source of creativity and fun, as in two short conversations from pupils working in groups:

Comment vous appelez-vous?
Je m'appelle Bond, Jules Bond.
Bonjour, M Bond.
Appelez-moi Jules.

Bonjour Mme Collins, quel est votre passe-temps favori?
Le mariage.

Interpersonal interaction drawing on the experiences of participants then becomes as important as set texts in print or on cassette in determining syllabus content.

Input will not become 'charged' with personal meaning then unless learners actively relate it to their experience, as stored in long-term memory.

- A teacher hoping that someone in the group remembers ... :

> Der Pate ... *Also, das ist ein Film mit Marlon Brando und James Caan ... Was ist das? ... Mit Marlon Brando?* ... Der Pate? ... *Nein* ... Der Pate *ist ... Mit Marlon Brando? ... Nein? ... Wißt ihr das nicht? ...*

In another sense, pupils' experience might be exploited in order to influence the future direction that their syllabus might take. One pupil's future experience will become an input for the benefit of the whole class:

T : *Tu vas en France cette année?*
P : *Oui, monsieur, à Paris ....*
T : *A Paris? ...*
P : *Oui ...*
T : *Alors, tu prends des photos pour nous*

VARIATION IN RATE OF DELIVERY

Competent speakers of any language adapt their talk in various ways in order to suit their interlocutors or the perceived needs of the situation - this includes rate of talk. A problem-creating teacher will not always talk fast, but will often do so, in contrast to a problem-reducing teacher who will tend to talk slowly and clearly. Pupils will have two sorts of challenge: first, coping with fast talk when it comes; second, puzzling out why the rate of delivery is being varied when this happens.

Recently, a teacher who had just completed a brief period of secondment as a curriculum development officer in order to support the regional adviser in modern languages, mentioned to me that on his first day back at school, with a class that did not know him well, he had experienced so much pleasure at resuming the teaching role that, more or less on the spur of the moment, he had decided to throw the (mixed) class in at the deep end, to immerse them in a *bain de langue*, spoken fast. His perception of the lesson was that it had gone very well, that there was a buzz of excitement in the room and that the class responded favourably and successfully to the challenge.

Fast talk on audio-cassette can at times be extremely difficult to understand, though tribute should be paid to the increasing amount of good, fast-talking, authentic audio-recordings that are now becoming commercially available. Fast talk from a living human being who is there in the classroom can be rendered highly accessible by combining problem-creating (PC) and problem-reducing (PR) variables, e.g. a fast talking (PC) teacher who makes use of gesture (PR) and visual cues (PR) in order to communicate meanings.

CONTEXT-REDUCED LANGUAGE, SPOKEN AND WRITTEN

As language development proceeds, it eventually arrives at context-reduced communication in which language is the sole or predominant element rather than visuals, gestures, etc.

In consequence the problem-creating teacher will gradually introduce more and more context-reduced talk, forcing learners to cope with longer passages with fewer levels of non-linguistic support, thereby orienting them more and more towards communication through language.

This is not intended as a criticism of context-embedded talk, however, nor is there any suggestion that this should be discontinued as learners develop. Some aspects of language-use in real life are context-reduced and others are context-embedded. It is important for learners to make progress with both.

It is worth noting that gist extraction requires very different skills in context-reduced talk from what it requires in context-embedded talk. In the latter case, non-verbal as well as verbal clues are available, whereas in the former the gist must be extracted on the basis of verbal clues alone.

If pupils are to extract meaning from context-reduced language, it is essential that they should learn how different sorts of sustained discourse hang together. In particular they require sensitivity to devices that impose coherence and cohesion.

In spoken language

In consequence, when they are grappling with context-reduced language, it will be helpful not only to direct their attention to the contextual 'meaning' of the passage but also to ask them to work out how the text hangs together and how its meaning is affected by these devices:

> *... da lief ich durch alle Stuben ... bis ich in den Keller kam ... da saß eine steinalte Frau ...die wackelte mit dem Kopf ... ich fragte sie ... weißt du, ob mein Bräutigam hier wohnt? ... da klagte die Frau ... du armes Kind ... dein Bräutigam wohnt hier ... aber wenn er zurückkommt, so wird er dich töten ... und kochen ... und essen ... mein Schatz, das träumte mir nur ... da versteckte mich die Alte hinter ein großes Faß ... und kurz darauf kamen die Räuber auch züruck ... und schleppten eine Jungfrau mit sich ... der gaben sie dreierlei Wein zu trinken ... weißen ... roten ... gelben ... da zersprang das Herz ... mein Schatz, das träumte mir nur ... da entdeckte einer der Räuber einen Goldring auf dem Finger der Gemordeten ...*

The above is part of a story told in a film *Deutschland bleiche Mutter*. It is context-reduced in that language itself does almost all of the work of narration - mime, gesture, etc play very little role. The story works then as a self-contained story, but of course it is told within a given context which can only be understood by watching the film. So the story has one meaning as a context-reduced story and another as a story embedded within another context.

In the film the story is told by a mother to her very young daughter (some three years old), as they are wandering through the derelict German countryside during the last war. It is a rather cruel story of the German fairy-tale type, hence the recurrent use of *Mein Schatz, das träumte mir nur*, the use of *da* with inversion of the verb to sustain the narrative effect, and the appearance of certain things in threes, a common feature of fairy-tales. The story has the aim of deflecting the child's attention from the depression and horror of their current existence and activity. Suddenly they come across a corpse lying in a pile of rubble, and the cruelty of the story (Germany of fairy-tales) comes face to face with the cruelty of real life (Germany suffering in war), and the mother's purpose is temporarily thwarted.

The problem-creating teacher will not accept mere gist extraction along the lines of maidens and robbers.

Turning to the school classroom, the teacher in the following example has conveyed the sense of *propre* by setting it in a context in such a way that its meaning may possibly be inferred from the other language that she uses:

> *Je me suis acheté ma machine à laver automatique ... Alors j'ai fait trois lessives ... pour m'amuser ... Alors tu regardes le linge ... qui fait des tours comme ça ... et puis tu sors le linge ... et c'est tout propre ...*

It is not possible to mime unambiguously the meaning of *propre*. In order to get at this meaning, learners must understand much if not all of the language that precedes it. They must also be able to draw on their knowledge of the world, i.e. know that one of the qualities produced in garments that come out of a washing machine is that they are clean. Garments in this condition of course have other qualities too, so for some learners *propre* could be 'clean', or 'very wet' or 'crumpled'. Learners oriented to achievement rather than reduction will wish to pursue this meaning, either on the spot by means of further interaction or by consultation afterwards.

Sometimes comprehension of the meaning of a new word may be aided by contrasting it with a word that is already known.

In the example given below, the teacher is talking about cats. The meaning of *féroce* is suggested by a variety of problem-reducing strategies, such as: L1 cognate ('ferocious'); intonation and emphasis; mime (scratching action) and gesture, but use is also made of contrast, with *féroce* being contrasted with *timide*:

> *Vous voyez comment il est timide? ...... Tandis que Tobias ... est très très féroce ... très très féroce ... Oui ... Et il griffe ... (*mimes action*) ...*

In this case the dividing line between problem-reducing and problem-creating is very narrow indeed, but in principle getting the meaning of *féroce* from *timide* is a more complex operation than guessing the meaning of *timide* itself.

Contrast may also be used in order to aid comprehension of simple grammatical distinctions:

L : Je suis alleé avec mon copain
T : Ah, comment est-ce qu'il s'appelle?
L : Karen
T : Ah, c'est pas un *copain* alors ... c'est une *copine*

Here, the teacher as a result of the interaction is in no doubt as to the learner's meaning but has not accepted it as such. She puts the matter back to the learner by asking her to reflect further - on the difference between *copain* and *copine*.

In written language

All of the examples given thus far have been of spoken language, but it is in writing that context-reduced language is perhaps more often expressed. With spoken language the context is normally there already, but with written language it often has to be created by the writer.

Pupils as readers must accordingly learn how to 'read through' the words on a page in order to create a mental image of the context the writer wishes to express. To those who have learnt how to do this, there can be few more pleasurable experiences in life than reading - a veritable key to the imagination. To those who have not, reading is at best merely functional and at worst a pain.

Many kinds of functional reading are context-embedded rather than context-reduced, e.g. menus, timetables, shop signs, concert programmes, tickets, diagrams. They are not intended to make total sense in themselves but rather to add to the meaning of a more general context.

Examples of context-reduced texts on the other hand are often found in poems, songs and short stories. In order to comprehend them, a pupil must not only understand the words which are used but must also devine the context from the words. It is perfectly possible that different readers will read through the same text and create in their minds quite different contexts, all of them possibly valid.

The text of a play is another example of context-reduced language. One of the joys of going to the theatre or the opera over the years can be to see different interpretations of the same play. Different producers and actors will create different contexts from the same words.

A West German writer[3] writes of a poem which he and others of his generation cannot but interpret as having to do with crimes committed under the Fascist regime. A younger student aged 25 from the same country thought it expressed contempt of present conditions in the Federal Republic. A student from Thailand thought it had to do with the Buddhist sense of truth.

I myself well remember giving Prévert's poem *Déjeuner du matin* to a second-year French class at school, and asking them to note down in English in their own words what they thought it was about. Views included:

- a lovers' quarrel
- a sad parting after a brief encounter between strangers
- a spy taking leave of a temporary girl-friend
- a person who had lost everything gambling on the horses, going off to commit suicide.

It is important for pupils to grasp that meanings do not altogether exist in words. They have to be perceived through them. Sensitive use of context-reduced language helps in this respect.

UNPREDICTABLE TALK

For reasons already given, it will be advisable to choose topics for talk that build on learners' experience. The problem-creating teacher will, however, often introduce an element of unpredictability:

- the waiter will sometimes forget the order
- the train will be on time.

Unpredictable turns such as these will be designed to activate learners' problem-solving strategies.

In the words of Faerch and Kasper[4]:

> *preparing them for situations for which they have not been prepared.*

French cinema contains many examples of unpredictability. One thinks of Jean-Luc Godard's *Alphaville* which, though existing in another galaxy, bears a startling resemblance to Paris. When the American detective puts a question to Natasha, one of Alphaville's inhabitants, she slowly shakes her head from side to side and replies *Oui*.

Bunuel's films also offer many instructive models. In one, a military emergency is declared and a group of soldiers are expected to deal with it immediately, but their commander insists that they should not depart until one of them had recounted to the others a beautiful nightmare that he had had.

The problem-reducing teacher will assume that one kind of reality is more than enough, thank you, but the problem-creating teacher will not accept this. Nor will the problem-seeking learner.

RAISING THE COGNITIVE LEVEL

In the CI project separate studies were conducted on using the foreign language in order to teach aspects of grammar and of background civilisation to first-year mixed-ability classes. This implies activities that are information-oriented rather than social or transactional, and up to that point they had tended to be conducted in L1. It was not known to what extent pupils and teacher would be able to cope.

HM Inspectors of Schools[5] endorse the use of the foreign language as a means of helping pupils to come to terms with language structure. They describe one particular lesson in which the teacher, using the foreign language, clarified difficult points on the blackboard and explained instances of incomprehension which he had spotted. They conclude:

> *This lesson well illustrated the benefits of using the foreign language in an aspect of language learning where English tends to predominate.*

A conclusion of the CI investigation was that activities of this sort are feasible, even with classes at the beginners' stage. One difficulty, however, was the possible restriction of pupils' potential contributions to discourse of this nature. If pupils are to make something of cognitively demanding topics such as 'rules of a language system', they must learn how to intervene, to interrupt the flow of teacher talk in order to personalise the meanings that the teacher intends. The point is further developed in the chapter dealing with 'achievement strategies'.

One means of raising the cognitive level is by raising the level of task above that of the tourist transaction: e.g. persuasion, discussion, negotiation, debate, reporting, extended interviewing. If, however, learners are to develop an ability to participate in activities such as these, then it will be necessary for teacher-talk and many other forms of input to run well ahead of any major expectations on output in these areas.

The MDDO in-service training video[6], produced in Scotland, shows some excellent examples of talk that is structurally not too difficult but that at times treats topics as matters of substance, e.g. the interviews with three French-speaking 'assistants' in which they discuss their hopes, their careers and their genuine interests. Topics touched upon range from the Celtic tradition in Scotland to life in Madagascar.

A video-bank of foreign language assistants and others interacting spontaneously for a variety of cognitive **and** imaginative purposes would do more good for general foreign-language development than any other material or technological resource I can think of, particularly if passages were 'interrogated' several times in order to extract as much meaning as possible.

There are resources available that we have generally not tapped. An undergraduate student of mine who is French, married to a Scotsman and with a young daughter, did her Honours dissertation on the topic of French mothers, married to Scotsmen, living in Scotland and bringing up their children bilingually. This involved interviews and visits to homes. Quite apart from the academic interest that this topic may raise, it reminds us that within our community there are many parents (not just mothers) who are native speakers of a language that is taught in schools as a foreign language.

It would be instructive, for example, if video-recordings could be made of such parents talking in the foreign language to their children, not just in the interview mode but while doing things in the home or outside. The value of this for foreign-language learners at school would be that they could both experience and reflect upon what adults and children actually say to each other in such circumstances. Learners, for example, might construct their own grammar and lexis of foreign language parent-child talk, an activity that would undoubtedly appeal to the intellect and imagination of many, and that could have spin-off benefits for their awareness of parent-child talk in general.

Another method of raising the cognitive level is to teach/learn other subjects through the medium of the foreign language. Teaching might be by means of immersion programmes, learning by means of electronic mail or other aspects of information technology. The final chapter of this book develops this point further.

SETTING PRECISE TASKS

The advantages of setting simple tasks in advance of a comprehension activity have already been commended as a problem-reducing strategy. This can also be exploited for problem-creating purposes, if learners are asked to obtain precise information in order to make judgements which they might subsequently be asked to justify.

There might, for example, be a video-recorded role-play in which three assistants acting as candidates are being interviewed for the same job. The class has to decide who is the most likely to be offered the post, to give reasons for their preference and to explain why the other two were less successful.

If the requirement on rigorous discrimination is withdrawn, so that learners are merely asked to listen or view and then to make 'their own' choice, many will 'reduce' the scope of the task so that it can be accomplished on the basis of their existing foreign language competence. They will not feel the need to extend that competence.

SETTING NO TASKS

If we think about foreign language comprehension activities in which we ourselves engage in real life, very often there is no idea of task specified in advance. *Oh good, there's a French film on television this evening. I must try to watch it* ... that sort of thing. We watch the film without too many preconceptions that might enable us to establish predictions or to imagine any highly specific follow-up activities. We watch it because we enjoy that sort of thing. As we watch it, however, we begin to make connections in our mind with previous experiences that we have had, whether in real life or through films. This helps us to decide what we are going to make of the film when we have finished viewing it. Perhaps it will be filed away, never to be retrieved, or perhaps it will turn out to be something that we want to talk about with others.

Pre-specified communication 'tasks' are sometimes a good thing but, as is argued in my section on motivation, they can often impose extremely limiting frameworks too, and the concept of the totally 'task-based' foreign-language curriculum should be vigorously opposed. The problem-creating teacher will accordingly see it as extremely important to help learners learn how to make their own connections between present input, past experience and future activity, whether in the short or the long term.

No doubt like many others, at school I read *Lettres de mon moulin* with great pleasure in second year. It was a struggle but also an achievement. The question of making any further communicative 'use' of it did not arise until much later.

PROBLEM-CREATING STRATEGIES: PRODUCTION

ENCOURAGING THE EXPRESSION OF PERSONAL MEANING

Whereas a problem-reducing approach tends to require of pupils that they produce language derived fairly directly from texts which they have been studying, a problem-creating approach encourages them to look within themselves in order to seek the meanings they would like to express, whether or not these have been encountered in texts with which they are familiar, and to find some way of expressing these meanings in the foreign language.

Instead of proceeding in pursuit of a given syllabus, the nature of which has been determined by someone else, e.g. teacher or course-writer, pupils are encouraged to determine for themseves what they will next need to know. Everybody does not go *geradeaus* in the same direction, but instead each individual takes their own *exzentrische Bahn*.

The challenge to both teacher and pupils of really working out what they would like or need to express at any given time on any given topic should not be underestimated, but nor should the feeling of high motivation if the challenge is successfully met.

In order to encourage pupils to express personal meaning, the teacher may have to be prepared to be 'found out', to be revealed as ignorant of some of the words which pupils might require to know if they are to express themselves. One of the reasons why in the past some teachers have played safe and taught simply the course-book syllabus may have been a lack of confidence in their own foreign-language competence to deal with the unpredictable eventualities that would arise if a more open approach were adopted, and a consequent wish not to lose face.

In de-briefing sessions after their school teaching practice, students normally speak highly of the teachers with whom they have been working, but one feature that attracts criticism is the reluctance of some to play the speaking game in pupils' terms, e.g. *You can't say that. We haven't done it yet.*

If the expression of personal meaning really is of value, then it becomes important that the teacher should present himself or herself as an advanced learner, rather than as a native speaker, as someone who might have to look things up in a dictionary to help inquisitive pupils but who more importantly teaches them how to do their own research, e.g.

- consult a dictionary
- consult other reference books
- consult other people, preferably using the foreign language

Facing up to this challenge then, rather than avoiding it, can lead to an ability not only to express personal meaning but also to develop relevant skills of reference.

INITIAL FAILURE

Within most units of work, problem-creating teachers will put their class fairly quickly into challenging activities that require the complexity of real communication, knowing perfectly well that this will be beyond their language resource.

The purpose will be twofold: first, to challenge them to dredge something up from their existing competence by whatever means they can in order to 'cope' on the spot, which is what is often required in real-life foreign-language use; second, to make them aware for themselves of what they still need to know before the activity can be performed with adequate success, i.e. providing a basis for subsequent work that will aim to convert an initial 'coping' attempt into one that is more 'finely-tuned'.

Analysis of initial failure in a genuine attempt to communicate then is seen as providing learners with an incentive to extend their competence, thereby avoiding the danger of fossilisation.

Clearly, this approach may pose its own psychological problems, since many foreign language learners need to have their confidence built up rather than shattered, so it becomes important to ensure that failure is not unfairly overladen with moralistic ('Idle ...') or genetic ('Stupid ...') connotations.

The deliberate cultivation of an initial sense of failure creates a classroom ethos that is very different from what problem-reducing teachers favour. It can be a stimulus to 'enterprise' in the best, i.e. non-political, sense of that term.

REFUSAL OF PREMATURE HELP

In attempting any task of communication, particularly one that is designed to be somewhat beyond their capabilities, learners will come unstuck - they will not be able to communicate adequately. Those with a disposition to a reductionist approach will be tempted to seek help from the teacher or to lower their criteria, i.e. not extend their competence. If, however, they are to develop problem-solving strategies, then there must be limits to the amount of help which it is appropriate for the teacher to offer.

Whilst problem-reducing strategies such as 'scaffolding' have their uses in keeping foreign-language talk going, they have drawbacks too, in that most of the construction of utterances is done by teachers themselves. This has been evident in every research project that my colleagues and I have undertaken, and it is still manifest in both everyday classroom activity and in the conduct of oral tests, where scaffolding - by means of over-dominant teacher talk or constricting test scenarios set in L1 - at times has a severely limiting effect on what learners feel they can say.

By contrast, a problem-creating teacher will often simply wait in unthreatening silence, giving the learner time in which to formulate an utterance. When this comes, it is likely to be more revelatory than any learner-produced slot in a teacher-scaffolded syntagm, because it will represent a genuine attempt to think of what to say and of how to say it. The utterance may turn out to be structurally very different from what a teacher or native-speaker would say, but it will offer a more valid reflection of the learner's actual competence at that time.

Furthermore, informal experience suggests that if learners are left to solve their own problems when making a number of attempts at essentially the same task, with time allowed for group discussion between attempts, their performance-level will increase from one attempt to the next. They will have eliminated some errors but others will remain. This will offer a useful insight into the current state of their competence and might provide the basis for subsequent intervention.

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

Inevitably, there are times when foreign language development slows down and even appears to stop or regress. When this happens there are various views on how to get it going again.

One view is needs-related - examine your needs, set these at a higher level and then get cracking on communicative activity geared to this level. Natural processes will largely do the rest.

The other view is feedback-related[7]. Even where there is no clear perception of anything so specific as 'need', foreign language competence can be extended if teacher or other interlocutors indicate that mistakes have been made, provided that learners have some general intention to improve.

Positive feedback often tells them what works - so it is most important that the *Bravos*! and the *Très Biens*! should continue.

Negative feedback, provided it is not given in a destructive fashion, can encourage learners to reflect further on what they are doing. In consequence, there will be regular sessions in which recurrent error is pointed out, or where learners themselves are invited to do this, e.g. they may audio-record or video-record themselves performing an activity, then review this once or twice in order to identify good, bad and indifferent practice and to consider how range, fluency and accuracy might be improved.

Research on successful foreign language learners[8] indicates that they solicit feedback, both positive and negative.

SETTING PRECISE TASKS, WITH LIMITED SCAFFOLDING

If pupils' foreign language competence is to be extended, then arguably they should be encouraged to attempt tasks that are both

- slightly beyond them, and
- precisely specified.

If the task is vaguely specified, pupils may well 'reduce' it to make it fit their existing competence.

Let us assume that an accident has occurred and that a reporting task has been deemed appropriate. A vaguely specified task would simply ask pupils to report on the accident. A more precise specification would minimally ensure that the pupils knew who they were (themselves or someone else) and for whom the report was intended (a friend, the police, a parent back home, etc). A judgement about successful task completion would take account of these factors.

It can become counter-productive, however, to scaffold the task by providing detailed prescriptions of what pupils should or might say or write. Many basic speaking activities over the past few years have fallen into the trap of being over-prescriptive, e.g. a task beginning with the following prescriptions:

Customer : attract waiter's attention
Waiter : acknowledge, then offer menu
Customer : accept menu with thanks, choose from it
Waiter : Take order ... etc

A possible explanation for over-prescription of this sort may be that some teachers fear that certain pupils may be so lacking in imagination or linguistic competence that without this detailed support they would not be able to perform.

Colleagues and I have investigated this assumption[9] and not been able to find evidence to support it. We found that pupils performed better, i.e. more fluently and with greater range, when given tasks that were clearly stated but not over-prescriptive, provided that they had discussed with their teacher beforehand what was generally involved in doing tasks of this sort.

SIMULATION

In the CI project a number of action-research studies were conducted on simulation and role-play. The difference between the two was:

> *Role play was used for activities in which at least some participants took the part of characters other than their real selves (such as waiters, policemen or pen pal family members); simulation was used for activities in which participants kept their own identities, but enacted an imaginary situation (e.g. arranging an outing with a friend).*
>
> *Role plays and simulations are both to be distinguished from structure drills and exercise by their character as complete speech events, with discourse coherence obtaining (or at least being aimed at) throughout the entire activity.*[10]

As examples of the two sorts of activity:

- in role play, pupils performed as customers and waiters, or as Scots and French pupils having school dinner, or as tourists and stallholders at an open-air market;

- in simulations, they were themselves, arranging joint outings (in the one case by telephone), based on given diary information.

One conclusion derived from these studies was that:

> *... some qualitative difference did emerge between the two main types (role play and simulation). The simulation studies involved information exchange and negotiation, and generally speaking produced conversations with greater*

> *discourse coherence, and more sustained topical development, than did the role play tasks.*[11]

If simulations did have greater power than role play, it may have had something to do with an opportunity for expressing personal meaning rather than the possibly stock phrases of stereotyped role characters.

It may seem strange, but being one's real self may indeed be more of a challenge than simply playing a role.

Simulations need not require of pupils that they should always be their real everyday selves as at present. Possibilities include:

- real everyday self: past, present, future
- imaginary self: past, present, future

What is important is that there should be a high degree of congruence between one of these selves and the part to be played. The less congruence, the more the activity becomes one of role-play.

Being more real than role-play, simulations may encourage pupils to produce more mistakes (of behaviour as well as of language). Not being absolutely 'the real thing', however, they allow pupils to get these mistakes out of their system. Trainee pilots for example make mistakes in simulated take-offs and landings, whereas in real life the same mistakes would incur much harsher penalties. It is therefore important to learn from mistakes made during a simulation, and normally a post-simulation de-briefing session is recommended in which pupils themselves play the leading part.

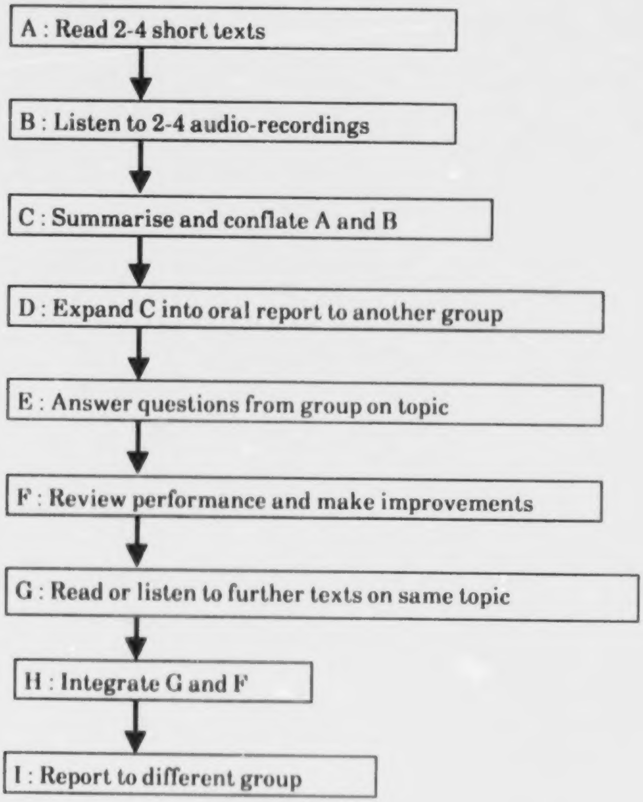
General research on simulations as a learning technique[12] suggests that caution should be exercised in regard to cue card prescriptions. Choice of mood, for example, should be determined by the participants and not by cue cards, since *simulations involve people, not stereotypes*[13]. It also appears useful in de-briefing sessions to encourage participants not only to talk about what they thought their problems were and how they tackled them, but also to explore what might have happened, if ...

ARTICULATION OF ACTIVITY

Many tasks will properly consist of one single activity based on at most two language modes - e.g. a shopping transaction requiring performance in listening and speaking. There is nothing necessarily trivial about this, because it could also apply to a brief but serious intellectual discussion on nuclear disarmament.

Other sorts of task, however, may possibly require the performance of several activities in sequence and the use of all four language modes.

A task may consist for example of reading three or four texts, listening to a couple of audio-recorded interviews, taking notes of key information, preparing an oral report for presentation to a group that has not had access to the texts and tapes, and being prepared to answer any questions that the audience asks:


A : Read 2-4 short texts
B : Listen to 2-4 audio-recordings
C : Summarise and conflate A and B
D : Expand C into oral report to another group
E : Answer questions from group on topic
F : Review performance and make improvements
G : Read or listen to further texts on same topic
H : Integrate G and F
I : Report to different group

Those favouring a reductionist approach will take each component activity in isolation and help learners to prepare for it, while those favouring a problem-creating approach will see the overall articulation of the whole task as a challenging problem for learners themselves to attempt to solve.

Distortion of information

A consequence of this strategy is that as information passes through a task from one activity to another, it is unlikely to remain the same. At some points it will be necessary to contract the message by selecting key elements, e.g. take notes; at others it will be necessary to expand the message again, e.g. from note-form into a coherent report. Often particular roles within tasks will make it necessary to distort or misrepresent a message, e.g. Person A who is very much in favour of a course of action passes a comment to Person B who passes the message on to Person C who is opposed to this course of action and who in passing the message on to Person D puts a personal gloss on it ... and so on. This is commonplace in real life and provides fertile ground for classroom activity.

COMMUNICATIVE TRANSFORMATIONS

Transformation exercises have always played an important part in foreign language teaching. Until recently, however, they tended to be structural or lexical in nature, e.g. transforming:

- singular into plural
- present into past
- nouns into pronouns

They may also usefully be applied to communication, in which case it becomes important that there should be identifiable people in a recognisable context who have a plausible purpose in making the transformation.

Possibilities include:

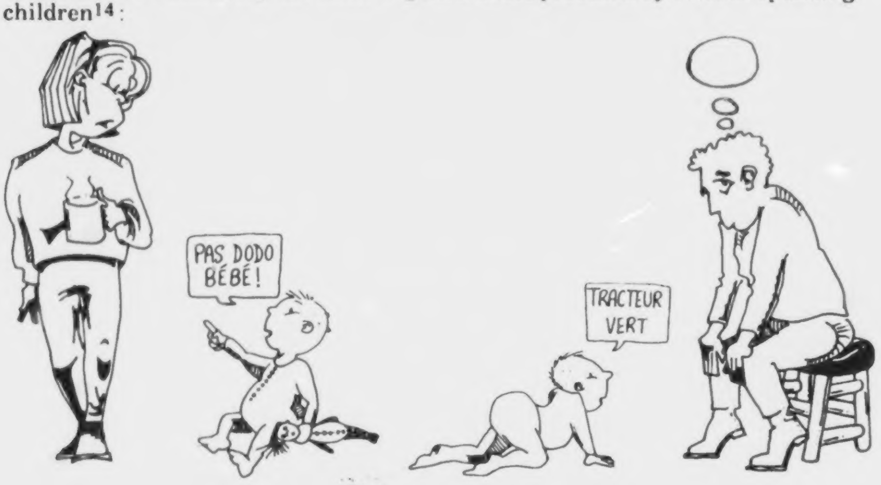
Informal into formal conversation or the reverse

This could happen when a pupil discusses the same topic with a peer and then later with an adult native speaker. A class might be given the exercise of working out how the two conversations would differ from each other, by transforming one conversation into the other.

A pupil might witness a theft, and report on this to a friend, a parent, the police, etc. Each report would have certain things in common but there would also be significant differences from the one to the other. The class might therefore be given the report to the police and asked to transform it into what they might say to a penfriend.

Child-language into adult variety

It would be useful to give pupils a number of children's utterances, high in semantic content, and to ask them to develop them into forms with more elaborated structure, e.g. the following utterances produced by French-speaking children[14]:



ENCORE COUTEAU

ENCORE BOIRE THÉ

PAS DODO BÉBÉ

MOI POUSSER

LA POUPÉE MYAMMYAM

LUNETTES TÊTE

TRACTEUR VERT

In each case, of course, several elaborated structures could be produced. Beyond that, pupils could be asked to fit each elaborated structure into a context of their own making.

Written sign into spoken form

Pupils could be asked to work out what they would say to themselves on seeing certain kinds of sign in which the language is highly condensed, e.g.:

ATTENTION! CHIEN MÉCHANT!

In the film *Un condamné à mort s'est échappé*, one prisoner had scratched on the wall of the cell the following four words:

PRESSION RESSORT

TROU CLEF

These four words were all that were needed to enable a subsequent problem-solving occupant of the cell to effect an escape. Pupils might work out what the prisoner might have said to himself on seeing these words.

Material on audio-cassette into written notes

Transforming other people's talk, e.g. lectures, reports, conversations, debates, interviews, committee meetings into one's own written notes is a useful and fairly common activity. The purpose of taking the notes is often to have a reminder of the essence of what was said, so as to be able subsequently to reconstruct the original message, though almost certainly not in exactly the same form. A class could be given audio-recordings to listen to with a view to making notes for some identified purpose, e.g. listening to a debate on cassette and taking notes in order to fairly represent the views of the two teams. Notes could then be compared.

Notes into discourse

A class could be given a list of items, e.g. for shopping, and asked to transform this into appropriate transactions between shoppers and salespeople. Or a diary could be found, and pupils could talk about what the notes might mean. A boss could leave notes for a secretary with the task of typing them into a coherent letter to a potential client.

Film into written summary

Pupils could view a film, then transform its content into a brief written summary designed to provide pre-viewing information for the benefit of those who had not yet seen the film.

Interview into letter

An interview could be presented on audio-tape, and the class could be asked to write a letter to a friend in which they gave information on what was talked about in the interview.

One mood or style into another

A letter could contain a particular expression of opinion. Pupils could be asked to re-write it from another point of view, e.g. transforming optimistic into pessimistic, or succinct into overflowing, realistic into imaginative, etc.

It is not difficult to think of many other kinds of communicative transformation. They have it in common that pupils are asked to manipulate language not just at the level of sentence structure or lexis but also at the level of discourse in order to achieve agreed purposes. The success of the attempt is then judged not on structural or lexical criteria, but on the basis of whether or not the purpose was well enough achieved.

In communicative language use we are making transformations all the time. Pupils learning a foreign language, however, require considerable help in this area. Otherwise, they are stuck with given texts which they more or less merely reproduce, for no clearly understood purpose.

In order to become good at transformations, they need to develop an awareness of the main features of different kinds of discourse, e.g. they need to learn how informal and formal conversations tend to differ from each other, to understand what characterises a succinct film summary, etc. This aspect is considered in greater detail in Chapter 8.

MULTI-MEANING MODE

In interaction with a class any teacher will be pleased when a learner says something that is correct and appropriate. At times, however, there will be a case for playing the Devil's Advocate, disagreeing with what was said and forcing the learner to expand on and justify the comment; or perhaps others in the class will see a gauntlet that might be picked up.

In this way learners will be keyed into a multi-meaning mode, alert to the possibility that there may be several interpretations rather than one. It will be noted that the multi-meaning mode increases in importance to the extent that the cognitive and imaginative level of topics and tasks is raised. In most everyday transactions, at market-places for example, a single-meaning mode is normally the one to operate, because of the high predictability of language-use in that context.

One possible technique for putting learners into the multi-meaning mode might be to explore the relationship between the propositional and the contextual meaning of spoken or written texts.

Consider for example the following conversation:

- *Wo sind denn deine Eltern ... deine Geschwister?*
- *Sind verschwunden ... die suche ich ...*
- *Und wie lange suchst du schon?*
- *Sechs Wochen ...*
- *Wiedersehen ...*
- *Auf Wiedersehen*

Anybody who understands German can extract propositional meaning from this conversation. It is in fact a conversation that might plausibly occur in a variety of settings. In fact, it actually occurred in the same German film as was previously mentioned. During the last war, a mother and her very young daughter came across a young boy whom they had never met before. Their conversation given above represents the totality of their interaction, a brief encounter between homeless people, all of them in search of things lost. In the film the conversation then has a specific contextual meaning as well as a more general propositional meaning, but the one propositional meaning has the potential to generate a number of different contextual meanings.

Another example:

- *Allez, c'est l'heure!*
- *Ah non, laisse-moi finir ma sèche ...*
- *Tu vas finir en route, mon vieux ...*
- *Je n'aime pas finir en conduisant ... on sent pas le goût ...*

Again, the reader can extract a considerable degree of general propositional meaning from this conversation. Its specific contextual meaning can only be understood, however, by viewers of *Le Salaire de la Peur* who are able to understand that the lorry-driver, who was keen to have an extended break in which to smoke his fag, had in fact lost his nerve and was inventing reasons for delaying the moment when they would have to drive off again with their load of nitro-glycerine. Once again, though, the same conversation could mean other things from what it means in this context.

A problem-creating teacher then might make up or select from various sources a number of very short and simple conversations (propositional meaning) and ask learners to imagine specific contexts in which these could occur. They would be allowed to put things before and after the conversation, in keeping with the contexts that they had created, and they would be allowed to change the conversation slightly in order to adapt it to a specific context.

Below are set out three utterances from the film *Poulet au vinaigre*. The reader might attempt to guess what the context is in each case. In order not to spoil the enjoyment of the film, however, the 'answers' will not be supplied here:

- *Un ... deux ... trois ... quatre ... cinq ... Où est Anna Foscari? ... six*

- *Eh bien, on a retrouvé la femme du docteur*

- *J'ai l'habitude de lui apporter son petit déjeuner.*
- *Chez elle?*
- *Oui, chez elle.*
- *Très bons, moelleux et très bons.*

CULTIVATION OF ALTER-EGOS

It is widely but mistakenly believed that in foreign-language classes *pupils should always be their real selves*, on the grounds that they are really Scots - or other - youngsters who hope to become good speakers of the foreign language rather than aspire to present themselves as native speakers of that language. On this view, it is *a bad thing* if for example they are given foreign-language names.

While of course it makes sense that some of the time they should act consciously as their real selves, it makes equally good sense that quite often they should not.

For two reasons, over-reliance on the *You are a Scots youngster who* ... view can easily become seriously counter-productive:

> First, it fails to tap one of the main orientations for foreign-language learning, i.e. integrative motivation, the wish to identify closely with or possibly even merge into the group that speaks the particular foreign language.
>
> Second, it may put an impenetrable shield around their existing concept of self to the point that it cannot become receptive to outside influences.

For foreign-language development to take place, to some extent we have to think of the permeable rather than the impenetrable self.

This point is developed more fully in Chapter 7, so for the moment let it suffice to argue that the problem-creating teacher will encourage learners to explore their potential selves rather than always perceive their identity as being unproblematically 'given'.

On a closely related point, it is useful to acknowledge that some patients suffering from mental illness have gained relief through learning a foreign language, because this has helped them to function as a somewhat different person. When in their normal-self mode, the system becomes over-charged and fuses blow, but this does not happen in the foreign language.

We might also remember that both girls and boys do well at foreign languages in single-sex classrooms, where of necessity they have a wider range of roles to perform than is otherwise the case. This is definitely not a recommendation in favour of single-sex classes, but we should not ignore the potential of a foreign language to transform one's personality, even if only temporarily.

Furthermore, there is research evidence[15] to suggest that participation in drama encourages learners to lower their sensitivity to rejection. When performing, they are prepared to accept a wider range of both positive and negative emotion directed at them. In consequence, a wider range of feelings and ideas become available for expression than is permitted when the normal everyday concept of self is dominant - for language work a potentially priceless asset.

As a Scottish example of the role of drama in encouraging lowered sensitivity to criticism or rejection, let me mention one school in which cooperative teaching has been the norm for some time, in which one of the teachers remarked:

> *When we teachers do interactive role-play with each other anything goes ... we're constantly slagging one another in front of the pupils ... it's great fun, and we don't really mean it of course ... the pupils enjoy it greatly ... and quite often they join in too.*

The problem-creating teacher then will create the conditions for dramatic role-play and simulation in which the very act of becoming another person, or another manifestation of the potential self, is intended to release inhibitions and tap sources of inspiration which individual learners in their more mundane self-identity would never dream they possessed.

CURRICULUM PLANNING BY LEARNERS

Planning lessons

On a problem-creating approach, teachers themselves will not make all of the important decisions regarding the planning and conduct of lessons. In principle they will favour an approach in which learners take some measure of responsibility in this area. This does not imply an abdication of professional responsibility but rather the creation of a context in which learners may develop and then test in practice their own theories as to how a set of communicative activities should be planned and implemented. The process is likely to include discussion and negotiation with the teacher and has the aim of encouraging the development of autonomy and awareness of what communication requires.

Drawbacks to teacher-centred lessons

Research conducted on the continent of Europe[16] indicates that certain disadvantages inevitably arise when lessons are conducted on a heavily teacher-centred basis. It is claimed that in the lessons observed teachers took total responsibility for openings and closings, for the nomination of topics, and for the organisation of turn-taking during sequences of oral interaction. Learners received no opportunity to develop techniques for introducing and if necessary negotiating new topics. They were not getting the chance to decide when and how to intervene in conversations, nor to anticipate and if necessary pre-empt or defer conversational closings. Yet, the researchers argue, these are centrally important features of everyday conversations in real life.

In consequence, those who are keen to encourage a problem-solving approach in learners will give them sufficient opportunity to develop strategies for coping with these important aspects of language use.

This might be achieved by handing the responsibility for planning certain lessons over to learners; and, in other lessons that are teacher-led, by inviting the nomination of topics for talk; and by discussing and deciding together on how long particular segments should last and who should do the talking in them.

Classroom researcher

I have seen a number of very junior classes on the continent of Europe in which as a matter of routine one pupil per month was nominated as the class researcher, with the task of going round the various groups as they were working, asking how they were getting on, taking note of any problems and then reporting back to the teacher. All of this was conducted in L2. Apart from sensitising the teacher to learners' perceptions of their problems, it led to interesting and useful discussions about the what, the why, the when, the how and the with whom of classroom activity and in the process increased pupils' awareness of what is involved in learning how to communicate in an L2.

Multi-media projects

Additionally, a class might attempt a project. Every now and again time would be given to work further - assembling information, seeking advice from the teacher, consulting dictionaries and other reference books, making plans on how to present a report to the rest of the class e.g. by use of overhead projector, audio or video, and so on. This might run as a *leitmotif* throughout a term, with the pay-off coming towards the end of the term.

There is evidence[17] that project work of this sort has had a major impact on the L1 performance of pupils who had been considered by staff to be linguistically deprived write-offs.

Imaginative use made of wordprocessors

In foreign language classrooms, school and class magazines have been produced as projects, with excellent use being made of wordprocessors in order to shape text over several drafts to suit their purposes, and incidentally establishing the centrality of creative writing not only as a communicative activity in itself but also as one that strongly supports speech.

Pupils set tasks for each other

Describing good practice, HM Inspectors of Schools[18] note:

> *Pupils of widely differing abilities have produced their own workbooks, consisting of pieces written by themselves with associated tasks which are given to other pupils to complete.*

The same has been noted in the research that colleagues and I have conducted for the Scottish Education Department. This has applied not only to everyday classroom activities but also even to assessment. In one case, a teacher had temporarily run out of her daily supply of creative imagination and could not think of original ways of testing her class on a particular set of functions and topics. Without too much difficulty her class, a third-year group of slow learners, suggested twelve original new ways in which the basic material might be assessed, from which the teacher was able to make her own selection and adaptation.

CONCLUSION

In themselves problem-creating strategies are not necessarily strategies of communication. Rather, they represent what teachers might do in order to structure communicative tasks in such a way as to encourage pupils to extend their communicative competence.

The two categories of problem-reduction and problem-creation are not totally separate. Often, the one merges into the other. In a number of cases, a problem-creating strategy is a problem-reducing strategy but with some of the support withdrawn.

Most communicative activities will be composed of a number of instances of each type of strategy. It will be possible to manipulate these instances flexibly, in order to move the activity as a whole in the direction of problem-creation or the reverse, depending on the particular needs of the class at the time.

There is no suggestion that problem-reducing strategies should be for slower learners and problem-creating stategies for those who learn more quickly. Both sorts are accessible to and important for all categories of learner.

It is already clear, however, that there is not one single thing called a 'problem'. Some problems can perfectly well be solved by means of basic interpersonal communication skills, while others require cognitive-academic language proficiency. Subsequent chapters explore the strategies that learners themselves might apply and the types of proficiency on which they might draw.

CHAPTER FOUR

LEARNERS : REDUCTION STRATEGIES

There are many different kinds of communication problem which learners might attempt to solve, either in real life in or out of school, or by means of simulation or role-play.

Let us consider a small selection of possibilities.

In each case, a problem is stated and under it three possible 'solutions' are offered (A, B and C):

- Obtaining goods in a shop

  A Conducting a fluent transaction in the foreign language
  B Pointing and making use of minimal expressions
  C Pointing

- Understanding a teacher's explanation in the foreign language

  A Concentrating hard, and intervening with questions in the foreign language at appropriate moments
  B Concentrating hard, but not saying anything
  C Partly switching off, and later asking a friend in L1

- Reserving a room in a hotel abroad

  A Phoning in order to check quickly on availability, then confirming in writing
  B Writing
  C Asking someone else to do it for you

- Getting to know a penfriend and family

  A Interacting with them as best you can, initiating as well as responding
  B Trying to answer their questions
  C Saying nothing, but smiling pleasantly

- Being interviewed for a job

  A Talking at reasonable length, asking questions and making suggestions, as well as answering

B Answering questions at some length
C Answering in short phrases

- * Understanding a work of literature

A Reading it a number of times, during one of which the key words are looked up, and discussing it
B Reading it once only, looking up key words
C Reading it in translation

- * Persuading peers to accompany you to ...

A Making suggestions, giving reasons, taking account of objections
B Making a suggestion
C Pointing meaningfully

Although there are no golden rules, it is likely that in most cases solution 'A' would be the most preferable. At any rate it is one that learners would wish to have at their disposal, even if in some contexts they judged it wiser to adopt one of the other solutions.

For any foreign language learner, however, whose proficiency is not fully developed, solutions of the type 'A' represent 'taking risks', because they will be likely to be beyond learners in their demands, e.g. on range of vocabulary and structure. The other options are more based on 'playing safe', because they make fewer demands.

In consequence, two options become available:

- play safe, reducing the solution to 'B' or 'C' but in so doing reducing the potential reward, hence 'reduction' strategies

- take risks, attempting solution 'A' and possibly gaining a greater reward, hence 'achievement' strategies.

Faerch and Kasper[1] provide possibly the most comprehensive theoretical account of reduction and achievement strategies. This chapter and the next draw on their scheme but bring together a number of their finely distinguished categories, add some others and attempt to exemplify them more fully.

LEARNERS : REDUCTION STRATEGIES

The strategies discussed in this section are used by learners in order to reduce the scope of a communication problem, whether in comprehension or in production, or to avoid it altogether:

Comprehension

- * Attend only to known elements

- Attend only to obvious meanings
- Attend mainly to non-verbal cues
- Attend mainly to heavy semantic markers
- Restrict input to what is given
- Distort input by selective focus
- Refuse to persist
- Feign comprehension
- Retreat before the flood

Production

- Non-interactive listening role
- Mainly non-verbal communication
- Avoid or deflect topic
- Minimal expression of ambiguous messages
- Fixed phrases
- Distort reality
- Avoidance by false excuse

These strategies are not the preserve of slower learners. Many extremely clever and devious people, fearing that they may lose face if they think that they might make grammatical or lexical mistakes, draw on them in order to avoid having to communicate spontaneously in a foreign language.

It is probable that now and again we all find it useful to 'play safe', e.g. if our mental 'black box' has been assimilating large amounts of new material and needs time in which to sort itself out. Generally, however, learners should be discouraged from making extensive use of these 'reduction' strategies.

REDUCTION STRATEGIES : COMPREHENSION

ATTEND ONLY TO KNOWN ELEMENTS

A 'reducer' will tend to look for the known rather than attempt to puzzle out the meaning of the unknown, in which case the sum of items of known information will represent the gist of the message. This may well be a false assumption, however, for if a passage contains (say) 100 items of information of which the learner knows (say) 60 there can be no guarantee that those 60 will be the key elements constituting the gist. The other 40 elements may well contain vital information. By reducing the text from 100 to 60 elements the learner has found a problem-solution that fits their existing competence. An 'achiever' on the other hand would find some way of extending their competence in order to come to terms with the full text.

ATTEND ONLY TO OBVIOUS MEANINGS

'Playing safe' implies operating in a literal, single-meaning mode only.

A Scots youth spending some time in Germany was celebrating his birthday with some German friends. One of the birthday presents his mother had sent him was - of all things - a tin of haggis. This was ceremoniously heated and the contents shared out, accompanied by the local *Frankenwein*. When the meal was over the Scots youth asked *Hat's geschmeckt?*, to which one of the German friends smilingly replied *Man kann es essen*. A 'reducer' would take these words at their face value only, whereas an 'achiever' would be alert to aspects of sub-text such as irony, sarcasm or overstatement.

One of the major benefits of learning a foreign language is that it offers an opportunity to enhance one's experience by gaining insight into another culture, moving beyond an ethno-centric view of life. A 'reducer' will tend not to take advantage of this opportunity. Little attempt will be made to pursue cultural meanings intended by the speaker; instead these will be 'reduced' to fit existing preconceptions.

ATTEND MAINLY TO NON-VERBAL CLUES

A 'reducer' may often pay more attention to non-verbal than to verbal clues. Observing transactions at a baker's shop, a 'reducer' may be content to note that two loaves of bread and some croissants were purchased by that good-looking person wearing the tight jeans, rather than attempt to understand exactly what was said, which may or may not have had to do with a baker's shop transaction and which probably had nothing to do with tight jeans.

ATTEND MAINLY TO HEAVY SEMANTIC MARKERS

A 'reducer' may attend more to those words that are heavy with meaning than to those that convey finer distinctions. There will accordingly be a preference for concrete nouns, verbs and adjectives over, for example, morphological markers of number, tense and mood.

RESTRICT INPUT TO WHAT IS GIVEN

Some learners are content to restrict their foreign language input to what their teacher provides, e.g. talk, course-book, cassettes, reader, authentic texts. They feel threatened if encouraged to explore outside this finite universe, e.g. by taking their own initiative in communicating with native speakers, reading their own authentic texts, interrogating a database, because to do so they would have to rely on their own resources of knowledge, imagination, reference and persistence.

'Play-safe' learners of this sort will be at a disadvantage in the coming age of information in which it will be useful to be able to select for oneself input that is appropriate to the purposes one has in mind, and to possess the confidence and skills necessary for handling it.

DISTORT INPUT BY SELECTIVE FOCUS

One of the benefits of learning a foreign language is that it can help to break down cultural stereotypes. Through real contact with speakers of other languages we learn that they are not so ... after all. This does not imply of course that we are all interchangeable, only that the initial picture is often a stereotype that disguises those traits that genuinely characterise individuals and communities.

Some learners, however, prefer to keep their psychological distance. If their stereotype of Germans is that they are 'hard-working' or 'harsh', of Italians that they are 'amorous' or 'emotional', and of the Scots that they 'speak with a funny accent', then they will actively scan the input that comes their way in order to seek out these particular characteristics, thereby distorting it.

This is not only an intercultural problem. It also applies to schools. Teachers often impose a stereotyped image on pupils - who may well return the compliment on teacher and peers. Recently a student-teacher, working hard to animate a 12-year-old boy whose face was expressionless, was advised by another pupil not to bother: *He's our class thicko*!

Stereotyped expectation effects can influence not only those who perceive but also those who are the objects of the perception, in this case the deadpan boy who exhibited his behaviour because, to some extent at least, this was expected of him and he was conforming to the stereotype.

In all of these cases, input is being 'reduced' so as to fit existing schemas. There is little conscious effort to accommodate existing schemas in order to comprehend input more fully. An 'achiever' will both assimilate and accomodate, thereby learning from experience, but a 'reducer's' view of the world will hardly change.

Part of the answer must surely involve 'empathy' with other persons. This, however, is too 'risky' for reducers because it implies a venture into the unknown, i.e. out of the safety of one's own preconceptions and into the perspective of another person.

REFUSE TO PERSIST

A 'reducer' will tend to process information once only. The interlocutor will not be asked to repeat or rephrase in order to clarify meanings or to articulate more slowly or comprehensibly. The programme on audio or video-cassette may be played once but not half-a-dozen times. New words will not be looked up.

FEIGN COMPREHENSION

A well-known reduction strategy consists of pretending to understand. This may be achieved by reacting in exactly the same way as others in the group, but one millisecond behind them - laughing at an uncomprehended joke, registering communal disgust at some uncomprehended violation of human rights, nodding one's head in agreement and perhaps even inserting a comment designed to support the pretence such as *Ja, richtig* or *Oui, en effet*. Most of us have probably done this at some time or other, and possibly with good reason.

RETREAT BEFORE THE FLOOD

A Scots lady went into a grocer's shop in France. Although her command of French was by no means fluent she did have a good accent. She managed to order some goods by using two or three perfectly correct simple phrases in French, and received the goods from the shopkeeper. Two English tourists then came into the shop, unable to speak a word of French. They asked loudly and slowly in English where they might find a hotel. The Scots lady explained to them in English where they should go, and they departed. With a beaming smile and in a torrent of French the French shopkeeper, thinking that the Scots lady was French, congratulated her on her very good command of English, whereupon the Scots lady took fright and departed as quickly as possible.

Pour aller à la gare?

alors ... et puis ... mais ... mais ... et puis ... alors ... puis ... et alors ... mais ... et. après ... enfin vous

For a revelatory sequel to this same incident, please refer to the 'achievement' strategy entitled 'establish foreign identity' (page 81).

Many people have had the experience of being able to formulate a foreign language utterance, only to be intimidated by a voluminous and apparently incomprehensible response - at which point an 'achiever' will take up the challenge but a 'reducer' will exit.

REDUCTION STRATEGIES: PRODUCTION

MAINLY NON-INTERACTIVE LISTENING ROLE

Teacher-talk that is directed at a group which is not prepared to interact will simply hit everybody's ears in much the same way. 'Reducers' will tend to do nothing about this - they may respond monosyllabically to comprehension-checks initiated by the teacher but will be less likely to initiate their own questions with a view to rendering the teacher's input more charged with meaning for them as individuals.

Furthermore, even when responding, they will look for 'scaffolding' support from teachers, so that a short holophrase suffices. They may reach the point of scarcely being able or willing to perform in the foreign language without strong support from the teacher.

SETTLE FOR MAINLY NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

In certain contexts communication may take place almost without language - e.g. by pointing at objects in a shop, noticing what the price is and handing over the correct amount of money. There are of course times when this is perfectly adequate and indeed appropriate. Where, however, learners rely exclusively or mainly on non-verbal means in contexts in which communication would be better achieved by verbal means, then they must be considered to be 'reducers' rather than 'achievers'.

AVOID OR DEFLECT TOPIC

Reducers may avoid talking about certain topics because they suspect that their language resource cannot cope. If they are not confident about past-tense forms they may avoid talking about what happened last weekend. If they are not sure about conditionals they will be likely to avoid talking about what might happen or what they would do under certain circumstances. If they don't know much vocabulary relating to motor cars they will avoid participating in a discussion on this topic. They won't see participation in such discussions as an *opportunity* for increasing their foreign language competence. They may even make some comment designed to deflect the conversation to a topic with which they can already cope.

Another reductionist tactic is to deflect the topic on to someone else who is a more fluent speaker. A French teacher recently mentioned that when she and her husband, a reasonably competent speaker, were in France and engaging in conversation with French people, he tended to clam up, passing the conversational buck on to her. This of course is a natural reaction and not necessarily wrong, except that a learning opportunity with rich potential for exploitation has been avoided.

Another way of avoiding a potentially difficult topic is by not talking, by falling back on commonplace routines of non-verbal interaction. This is well illustrated at the start of the film *Un mauvais fils* in which the son is returning home after a period in prison in the United States for an alleged drugs offence. He and his father silently embrace each other at the doorstep, then they go inside and make coffee together, talking about what's involved in making coffee. Soon the father goes off to work. It is only much later that the serious topic is mentioned.

This incident shows clearly how reduction can perform a useful function by preventing the communication system from being overloaded with emotion until supportive sub-routines have been re-established.

MINIMAL EXPRESSION OF AMBIGUOUS MESSAGES

A feature of the language of some learners in the CI research project was their employment of short holophrases, normally below the sentence level. In the CI project report it is rightly argued that they made imaginative use of this very limited repertoire, e.g. by economically making one short phrase such as *demain cinéma* act variously as a statement of fact, a statement of intention, a suggestion, a request, a command, an invitation and a question.

Despite such inventiveness, however, it is probably realistic to consider this as evidence of a reductionist approach. They had either not thought of the various potential meanings that were involved, or they were reducing several different potential meanings down to one succinct multi-purpose basic and highly ambiguous meaning. An 'achiever' would certainly say *demain cinéma* rather than nothing in order to cope with an on-the-spot problem but would not really accept such ambiguity and would wish to find some means of interacting with the other foreign-language speakers in order to negotiate precise meaning and thereby ensure that the specific intention - a suggestion, a request, a statement of fact, etc - was conveyed and understood as such.

INSIST ON INCLUDING FIXED PHRASES

In the golden days of *Histoires Illustrées* and *Illustrierte Geschichten* large numbers of learners almost automatically began their essays with phrases such as *Par un beau jour d'été* ... or a German equivalent, while the birds were singing and the *Himmel* was *blau und wolkenlos*. Whatever the topic, certain stock phrases by hook or by crook were going to be included - a procedure that was often achieved with considerable ingenuity. This feature is still with us today, though it now takes the form of stock phrases in spoken language related to personal discussion of topics such as pet animals, sports, hobbies and penfriends. The use of reduction strategies such as *If you don't know it, don't use it!* has often led to good pass marks in national examinations where credit has been given for mistakes avoided rather than for interesting things communicated.

'Achievers', except possibly in these examination circumstances, would attempt to find some means of conveying the messages they wanted to convey, despite gaps in their knowledge, whereas 'reducers' would simply rely on what they already knew they knew.

DISTORT REALITY

In other words, tell lies! If a 'reducer' is asked a personal question and does not know exactly how to answer this, one option may be to present a false account of reality, using language that is totally known.

A girl had been interviewed in German in an important national oral examination. Later, her father asked her how she thought she had fared. She replied that it had gone fairly well - she had talked about her brothers, her sisters and her pet cat.

But, her father replied, *you haven't got any brothers or sisters or pet cat ...*

AVOIDANCE BY FALSE EXCUSE

Reducers will sometimes invent an excuse that enables them to avoid an interactional encounter. This strategy is often used when a 'reducer' meets someone of superior knowledge or status. Rather than reveal their perceived inferiority they will look for a way out.

In the film *La Dentellière*, Béatrice who works in a hairdressing salon is living with François, an intellectual student. François brings Gérard, a fellow intellectual, back to their flat. They are conversing when Béatrice returns with some shopping. François places the shopping on a kitchen surface:

- *Du sucre ... des yaourts ... de la confiture ... du vin ...*
- *Il n'y a pas de beurre?*
- *Non*
- *Zut! je l'ai oublié sur le comptoir ... j'y vais*
- *Attends, je vais y aller*
- *Non, non, j'y vais*

Exit Béatrice in haste.

CHAPTER FIVE

LEARNERS : ACHIEVEMENT STRATEGIES

Learners who are oriented towards achievement make use of strategies before, during and after the event that enable them to tackle problems as they are, rather than in reduced form.

Most of the achievement strategies described in this section are applied 'during the event' when inevitably the language-user, whether learner or native speaker, encounters obstacles. A means of expressing a concept, a function, a mood for example may simply elude the speaker, either because they cannot immediately recall an appropriate expression or because they have not encountered one up to that point.

Coping strategies

An 'achiever' will nonetheless find some way of 'coping' on the spot, possibly by dredging up something that 'works', even if only on a temporary basis and however inelegant the expression may appear. If learners are to cope with unpredictable obstacles that are somewhat beyond their competence at the time, inevitably an element of risk-taking is involved. This may imply quick thinking, imagination, initiative and a commitment to interaction in the pursuit of meaning, presupposing not only a non-puritanical attitude to the foreign language but also a degree of relaxation and self-confidence.

The point is well put in the Student's Guide to *En fin de compte*[1], a communicative programme for final-year university students:

> *The improvement we sense on going to France is in part a release from inhibitions. We cease worrying and use our full active resource. We cease to protect ourselves by withdrawing into a limited, more basic resource.*

For some authorities, 'coping' and 'achievement' strategies are one and the same thing. In this book, however, the term 'achievement' has a broader meaning. It includes both 'coping' and 'fine-tuning'.

Fine-tuning strategies

Successful foreign-learners[2] are often not content simply to 'cope' in possibly a rough and ready fashion, though they are quite prepared to do so if necessary. In addition, however, they often wish to 'fine-tune' their performance. This may entail planning before the event and evaluation afterwards, but it may also imply interaction in pursuit of precise meaning, especially in comprehension, during the event.

ACHIEVEMENT: DURING THE EVENT

Comprehension

- Attend to known and unknown elements
- Look for maximum clues
- Infer new meaning
- Predict what will happen
- Infer intentions
- Indicate comprehension or incomprehension
- Persist

Production

- Code-switching and gesticulation
- Literal translation and foreignising
- Word-coinage
- Simplification
- *Dingsbums*-ing
- Generalisation
- Paraphrase
- I've started, so I'll finish
- Restarts and approximations
- Establish foreign identity
- Appeal for repair and confirmation
- Initiate repair
- Initiate connections
- Small elements for added meaning

ACHIEVEMENT: BEFORE AND AFTER THE EVENT

- Plan optional pathways
- Seek variety of input
- Review

ACHIEVEMENT STRATEGIES : COMPREHENSION

Achievement strategies in comprehension often contain the following features:

Ask speaker to 'repair'

Learners may interrupt in order to ask the speaker to repair the breakdown, e.g. by clarifying what was meant.

Alternatively, they themselves may seek to cope with the breakdown by formulating their own hypothesis. Once a hypothesis has been formed, there are various possible ways of proceeding:

Solicit feedback on own hypothesis

They may interrupt, in order to let the speaker know the nature of their hypothesis, so that the speaker may provide feedback as to its correctness or appropriateness.

Process subsequent input

It may not be appropriate to interrupt, however, e.g. if input is in the form of a lecture, in which case they may remain silent, listening very carefully to what the speaker subsequently says, to see if anything is said subsequently that might help to confirm, disconfirm or modify their hypothesis.

Consult after the event

If after the event they are still uncertain about some meanings, they may consult the speaker or perhaps their classmates or a reference source in order to seek clarification.

By drawing as appropriate on these options, 'achievers' will work actively in the pursuit of precise meaning. They won't simply let meaning 'happen' to them.

SOME EVIDENCE IN FAVOUR OF ACHIEVEMENT STRATEGIES

There is evidence to suggest that interaction by learners in the pursuit of meaning facilitates both the particular act of communication and the development of their foreign language competence.

Two competing approaches to comprehension

In one research study for example[3] two different approaches were matched against each other:

a. PREMODIFIED INPUT WITH NO INTERACTION

This strategy was very much in keeping with the problem-reducing approach discussed previously. Teachers took account of their knowledge of learners in order to simplify their input in advance of presenting it, so as to make it as comprehensible as possible, but not allowing pupils to interact when the input was being offered.

b. UNMODIFIED INPUT WITH INTERACTION

The competing strategy consisted of presenting the same content but this time with two differences. It was not simplified in advance, i.e. when presented it was lexically and structurallv more complex than the premodified input, but learners were allowed to interact with their teacher as the input was being presented.

Results

The results indicate that the second approach of 'unmodified input with interaction' was superior. Even when input was structurally more complex, learners understood it better because they interacted with it rather than accepted it as it was.

High input generators and charged input

A similar conclusion was reached in another research study[4]. By applying interactive achievement strategies in comprehension, learners become 'high input generators' who ensure that a more personalised 'charged' input comes their way that penetrates more deeply than the kind of simplified and undifferentiated input that goes with a unidirectional reductionist approach.

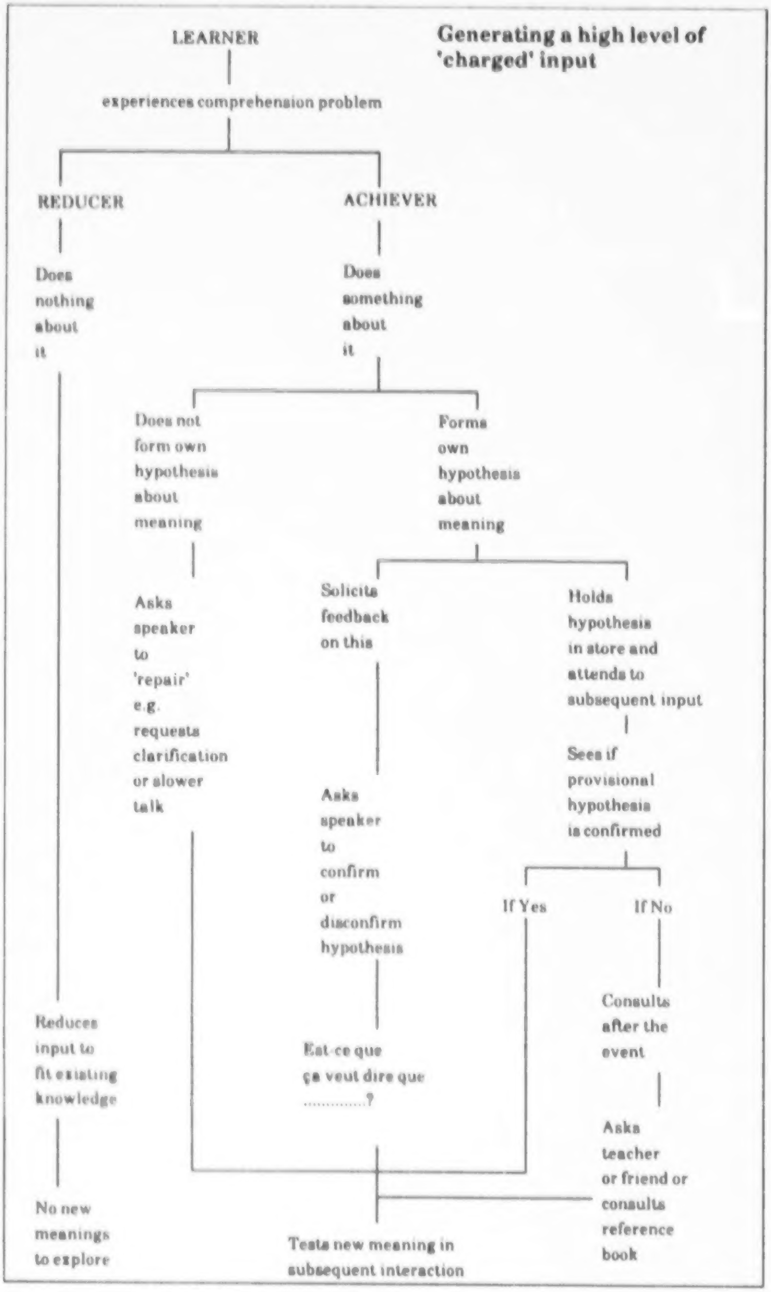
This underlines the importance of learning how to 'speak for comprehension'.

Another research study[5] aimed to identify any significant differences between older (mainly adolescent) and younger learners at the same proficiency level. It was established that the older learners did more negotiation work than their younger counterparts, and that the younger ones received more simplified input. The more advanced interactive strategies operated by the older learners allowed them to extend their competence, from which it might be inferred that discussion with younger learners of how to 'manage' or 'negotiate' conversational interactions would be advantageous.

Achievement strategies in reading

In another study[6] the researchers concluded by underlining the importance of 'risk-taking' as a reading strategy. This was one of the characteristics that distinguished high from low proficiency readers of a foreign language. The successful readers were prepared to infer and guess, and to test these hypotheses out against subsequent input, whereas the less successful readers were more at the mercy of literal meaning.

Each achievement strategy in comprehension will now be described in turn:



Generating a high level of 'charged' input

LEARNER
experiences comprehension problem
REDUCER
ACHIEVER
Does nothing about it
Does something about it
Does not form own hypothesis about meaning
Forms own hypothesis about meaning
Asks speaker to 'repair' e.g. requests clarification or slower talk
Solicits feedback on this
Holds hypothesis in store and attends to subsequent input
Sees if provisional hypothesis is confirmed
Asks speaker to confirm or disconfirm hypothesis
If Yes
If No
Consults after the event
Est-ce que ça veut dire que ....?
Asks teacher or friend or consults reference book
Reduces input to fit existing knowledge
No new meanings to explore
Tests new meaning in subsequent interaction

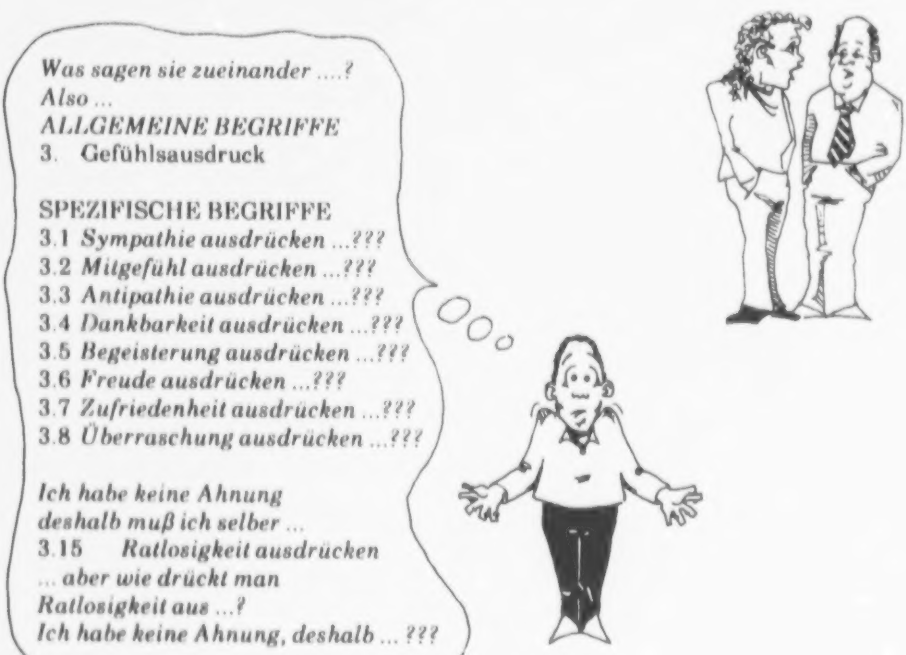
ATTEND TO KNOWN AND UNKNOWN ELEMENTS

Foreign-language learners oriented towards achievement in comprehension will not be satisfied with the mere recognition of known elements but will also focus on those that are unknown. In real language use it is inevitable that some or much language will be above the comprehension level, so it is important not to be too dismayed by this, to accept it as inevitable but to be resolved to do something about it.

It is not however a case of quickly separating input into known and unknown, for there are many occasions when something at first appears to be unknown, but in fact we have encountered it before, in some shape or form. In consequence, it is important not to be intimidated by the unknown.

Most learners on a communicative approach will have at their disposal a syllabus that consists in part of an inventory of language functions and general and specific notions. Despite its obvious merits, this kind of syllabus has been much criticised on the grounds that it has often had a stultifying effect on creativity, encouraging learners simply to produce phrases from a list.

It is however possible for learners to make creative use of a syllabus - when they are attempting to infer, predict and guess. It may prove useful for example to calmly run one's mind over those parts of the language syllabus[7] that seem to relate most closely to the input that is being presented:


Was sagen sie zueinander ....?
Also ...
ALLGEMEINE BEGRIFFE
3. Gefühlsausdruck

SPEZIFISCHE BEGRIFFE
3.1 *Sympathie ausdrücken ...???*
3.2 *Mitgefühl ausdrücken ...???*
3.3 *Antipathie ausdrücken ...???*
3.4 *Dankbarkeit ausdrücken ...???*
3.5 *Begeisterung ausdrücken ...???*
3.6 *Freude ausdrücken ...???*
3.7 *Zufriedenheit ausdrücken ...???*
3.8 *Überraschung ausdrücken ...???*

Ich habe keine Ahnung
deshalb muß ich selber ...
3.15 *Ratlosigkeit ausdrücken*
... aber wie drückt man
Ratlosigkeit aus ...?
Ich habe keine Ahnung, deshalb ... ???

The learner above has systematically reviewed and summoned up what he already knows from a notional syllabus in order to develop theories about meaning, though obviously still has problems in self-expression.

One thing is clear, however, it will be better if learners represent this syllabus to themselves in the foreign language rather than in L1 (which at present in the UK is overwhelmingly the norm). A functional-notional syllabus is best seen as an internal inventory of thoughts on which learners can draw. If the syllabus is in L1, then this means that they are being encouraged to think in L1 in order to comprehend and produce thoughts in the foreign language.

A mental syllabus such as the one above then has two points to commend it:

First, being an inventory of foreign-language concepts, it helps us to think in the foreign language

Second, it is highly organised, representing a hierarchical classification of possible thoughts that we might have, allowing them to be more easily retrieved from long-term memory than would be the case in a mental system that was lacking in organisation.

LOOK FOR MAXIMUM CLUES

An 'achiever', like a good detective, will pursue all relevant clues, both verbal and non-verbal. There will be a focus not only on heavy semantic markers and on non-verbal clues but also on subtleties of intonation, pausing, fleeting facial expression, gesture, and perhaps in particular on finer semantic markers such as morphology, mood, word-order, word-selection and modifiers.

Je t'aime bien means something different from *Je t'aime*, to say nothing of Jeanne Moreau's *Tu m'aimes vraiment ... d'amour?* spoken to her younger Italian lover in *Chère Louise*.

In Fassbinder's *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, Eva Braun distinguishes subtly between her American soldier lover and her husband: *Den Bill habe ich lieb gehabt ... und ich liebe meinen Mann*.

Marlene ... sei doch sensibel ... bitte! are the opening words of Fassbinder's *Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant*. They cannot be understood without considerable sensitivity to visual as well as auditory signals - the situation positively seeping with sub-text.

In class an 'achiever' will pay attention to discourse-markers so as to recognise instantly when the main points of the lesson are being made, when a new segment is being introduced, when one segment is being connected to another one (perhaps not the next in sequence), when a segment is being brought to a close, when an explanatory aside is being made, when the lesson is being summarised and when a pointer is being given to future classroom activity.

INFER NEW MEANING - CONFIRM, DISCONFIRM, MODIFY

Making intelligent guesses lies at the heart of foreign language use and development. An 'achiever', having looked for all possible clues, may still not know enough to be able to solve comprehension problems, so inferences have to be made. In order to do this it will be necessary to review those parts of the jigsaw puzzle that have already been put together and to make a provisional hypothesis concerning what the rest of the picture will look like. Possibly this hypothesis can be tested on the spot by asking the interlocutor to comment, but equally it may be the case that the hypothesis will be held in store until further information has come in that will help the learner to confirm, disconfirm or modify the hypothesis.

Inferencing skills may also be activated even when the meaning of every word is known but where there is difficulty in making out what is said. Listening to a car radio can in certain circumstances be extremely difficult because of interference and poor reception, not to mention faulty wiring. In such cases it is necessary to impose meaning on a flow of sound that under other circumstances would cause little difficulty. This can happen very often in foreign language conversations where factors such as speed of delivery, regional accent, unfamiliar intonation, speed of exchange and private connotations lying behind commonly used words can all pose problems.

PREDICT WHAT WILL HAPPEN - CONFIRM, DISCONFIRM, MODIFY

Whereas inferencing consists of making guesses at the meanings of unknown or unrecognised elements, this is not necessarily so with predictions. Here, a learner might understand every single word that is spoken, but even so it will be helpful to predict what is still to come. It is not possible for us to focus on each word separately as it is uttered in sequence. Instead, we are constantly seeking to perceive the whole picture, so our mind runs ahead of and behind as well as alongside what a speaker says. Without the process of predicting, confirming, disconfirming and modifying it would be difficult for us to make much sense of language at any level of discourse beyond the simplest and shortest exchange.

Read the example on page 161 beginning *Ich kenne nur einen einzigen* ... This invites the viewer to predict what is going to happen. In fact, something else happens (which I am not giving away), the effect of which would be greatly diminished if the prediction had not been strongly encouraged in the first place.

Achievers will make predictions based on various kinds of evidence, ranging from intonation, to gesture and facial expression, to knowledge of interlocutor, to knowledge of relevant real-life events, to sentence structure, to headlines, to front covers, to contents sections and many others. Activities in which learners are required to make different sorts of prediction will figure regularly in communicative classrooms.

INFER INTENTIONS - CONFIRM, DISCONFIRM, MODIFY

Speakers do not always mean what they appear to be saying. Sometimes they know exactly what they think but wish to give a different impression and so they use coded or misleading language. At other times, they themselves may not realise the implications of what they are saying. At other times still, they may know exactly what they want to say, and they may express this to the best of their ability but may not be aware of certain difficulties that the other person may have in understanding them.

So, there are limitations to the model of communication based on information-exchange. As was argued in Chapter One, it is never a case of mentally parcelling up a message and posting it into the head of a listener who then perceives the contents in exactly the same way as the speaker. Information has to be interpreted by both the giver and the receiver.

A number of Americans and Japanese were asked to perform the same act of communication[8], for which they received the same guidelines. The Americans tended to go straight and explicitly to the point, whereas the Japanese tended first of all to engage in ritualised interactions that had little direct or explicit reference to the point, and then they tended to talk round about the point rather than make it explicitly. The American assumption was that if you express quickly and directly what you mean, people will have a good chance of understanding you, because meanings can be delivered 'up front' by the transmitter. The Japanese assumption was that communication is more effective if approached more slowly and indirectly, because then meanings will have to be constructed or inferred by the receiver.

Even simple exchanges may have a problematical sub-text:

- *Kommst du mit ins Kino?*
- *Nein, leider muß ich zu Hause bleiben.*

In this exchange the second speaker in fact did wish to go to the pictures with the first speaker but did not wish on first asking to appear too keen. The first speaker therefore had to guess the second speaker's intention and formulate a follow-up utterance in accordance with that guess rather than in accordance with the apparent meaning of the words.

- *Encore du rosbif?*
- *Non merci.*

In this exchange the first speaker who is hostess for the evening has to guess why the second speaker is saying no. Is it because he doesn't like roast beef? Is it because there's something wrong with this particular piece - e.g. too underdone for a UK palate? Is it because he has already had enough? Is it because he's feeling unwell or homesick?... etc.

'Achievers' then will aspire to be sensitive to both single-meaning and multi-meaning modes of communication.

Let us take a deceptively simple classroom example. Within the same lesson three pupils, not in the same group, were asked the same question when engaging in role-play:

- *Tu viens à la piscine?*

One replied:

- *Non.*

Another replied:

- *Non, je ne viens pas.*

The third replied:

- *Non, merci. Je n'aime pas nager.*

The third pupil's response is not only lexically and structurally more complex than the other two. Perhaps more importantly, it indicates a significantly greater degree of interpretation of the question, in that this pupil has inferred the intention of the speaker as being 'invitation', and hence has fitted 'refusing', 'thanking' and 'giving reason' into the reply. The first two pupils are stuck with literal meaning, whereas the third has pierced through the words in order to infer their meaning and has responded accordingly.

INDICATE COMPREHENSION OR INCOMPREHENSION

Good listeners often signal comprehension or incomprehension to the speaker. Television interviewers for example have to become highly skilled in this, because they recognise that speakers require feedback that gives them confidence and that allows them to structure their next set of thoughts. Feedback may be offered non-verbally, e.g. by nodding the head, but often it will be appropriate to say something.

In the case of incomprehension, it may be appropriate to ask for repetition, paraphrase or clarification.

In the case of comprehension, it may be appropriate to indicate agreement or disagreement, or simply comprehension, even when the other person deliberately implies rather than explicitly states, as in the brief exchange between a Swiss business-man and Nathalie Baye in *La Provinciale*:

- *Vous savez bien ce que je ressens?*
- *Oui.*

Within the context of the film, no more is needed.

Often a speaker's utterances are not fully comprehended, in which case partial comprehension may be signalled.

Talking to Petra in *Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant*, Sidonie says:

> *Ich glaub' ich verstehe, was du meinst, ganz dunkel, aber ...*

This allows Petra to elaborate further, if she so chooses. In this instance, however, there is a further consideration to bear in mind. Petra has been alluding to a delicate topic which she probably does not wish to discuss in explicit terms. It is likely that Sidonie is aware of this, and hence her words which appear to indicate partial comprehension may in this case signal that she in fact fully understands that which cannot be talked about.

In signalling comprehension, incomprehension or partial comprehension the 'achiever' will be alert to such nuances.

PERSIST IN ATTEMPTS TO COMPREHEND

Even the best 'achiever' will often not cope at the first attempt to comprehend a speaker. One option may be to listen again. In direct interaction this will imply asking the speaker to repeat, clarify, etc. In communication at a distance - e.g. working with an audio or video-cassette - it may be possible to go over the material several times. Even highly accomplished foreign-language speakers often find it difficult to understand certain foreign-language films at the first attempt, and in authentic French and German films there is a great range in difficulty for the learner.

An 'achiever' will keep going and will see initial failure to comprehend as a challenge, whereas a 'reducer' will be more likely to give up.

As micro and video applications increase, it will become increasingly possible for individuals to work on their own for long stretches of time on material for comprehension. Those who persist will do better than those who give up easily.

ACHIEVEMENT STRATEGIES: PRODUCTION

In spontaneous direct interaction with one or more native speakers for purposes of communication, foreign-language learners will regularly encounter difficulties in expression. It is not just a question of the situation generating the need to say things that are beyond the learner's current language resource, but also very much one of time and timing. Perhaps it may be necessary to respond or initiate quickly when a momentary pause occurs, otherwise the conversation may well pass one by.

Get in, or miss the boat

In such circumstances, foreign-language learners must cope immediately, on the spot, with no time for calmly coaxing out of their long-term memory some totally correct and appropriate but perhaps partly forgotten expression, and no time for monitoring the correctness or appropriateness of what to say. Get in quickly or miss the boat.

There are considerable dangers in over-reflection - as illustrated by Charles Aznavour in *Tirez pas sur le pianiste*. He was walking along the street with a young lady whom he did not know well. They were not saying anything to each other. His mind was absorbed in thinking of how best to formulate a request that they should have a drink together. The film provides a voice-over of his thoughts. His final considered preferred choice is *Il parait que vous avez soif, moi* *aussi* but on impulse he turns and says *On prend un verre?*, only to find that she has gone.

Inventiveness and risk-taking

In order to achieve communication on the spot, 'achievers' will if necessary be prepared to take risks with the language, debase the coinage, i.e. to say things that a native speaker would be highly unlikely to say and that would be judged as incorrect in grammar books and dictionaries. This is the point at which the 'coping' strategies in production that are listed below will prove useful and will mark out the 'achiever' from the 'reducer'.

Some of the strategies, e.g. code-switching, dingsbums-ing, word-coinage are probably used solely for purposes of 'coping'. Others, depending on the context, might also be used in order to 'fine-tune'.

CODE-SWITCHING AND SUPPORTIVE GESTICULATION

If all else fails in attempting to communicate meaning in spoken interaction, an 'achiever' might insert an L1 word with an L1 pronunciation, possibly accompanied by suitable hand-sign language in the hope that an interlocutor might understand:

Excusez-moi, monsieur, mais je crois que mon ... emmm ... reversing-light ... là à gauche ... ne marche pas ... Pouvez-vous la réparer ... s'il vous plaît?

LITERAL TRANSLATION AND FOREIGNISING

Sometimes a literal translation from L1 into the foreign language might be attempted, even when the 'achiever' is certain that this will not generate *le mot juste*. Many foreign-language teachers probably still recoil at the recollection of such offspring of the grammar-translation approach as:

- *confiture de circulation* (traffic-jam) and
- *Klettereier* (scrambled eggs),

occasioned by inadequate use of and possibly excessive reliance on a dictionary. Nonetheless, it has to be said that the learners in question were actively attempting to generate meanings.

This strategy has its uses in spontaneous spoken interaction

- *Les bières sont sur moi*, and
- *Paul ist der Haupt-Junge der Schule*

have been readily understood in context.

'Foreignising' represents a related process - thinking of an L1 word and giving it a foreign language pronunciation. One hesitates to give examples in French because this will assuredly lead to their everlasting perpetuation in the form of 'franglais', so two German examples will have to suffice:

- *George Best war ein Genius*, and
- *Der Rosenkavalier ist meine Lieblingsopera.*

'Foreignising' also has to do with the gradual introduction of new terms into a language, as in one of the many immortal one-liners in *Cagney and Lacey*:

- *Meanwhile, we gotta get through two piles of video-dreck.*

WORD-COINAGE

In this case a non-existent foreign-language utterance is made up by applying the wrong rule.

A native speaker of English, celebrating with some German friends, said:

- *Ich habe das ganz spontanenhaft getan.*

The evening having reached a stage of good-humoured *Gemutlichkeit*, the German friends fell on the floor laughing.

A very accomplished speaker said:

- *J'aurai l'audacité de vous parler en français.*

In such cases, achievement strategies are being operated, though not necessarily consciously. A 'reducer' would have said nothing without having first checked for correctness everything that might be said.

SIMPLIFICATION

'Achievers' will be undeterred by the knowledge that their grammar and vocabulary are limited, and will be prepared to employ simplified structures:

- *Moi aller cinéma*, and
- *Voulez-vous piscine?*

Utterances such as these provide a reflection of the transitional grammar that the learner is operating at the time.

Not that all simplified utterances could be considered ungrammatical even by native-speaker standards. In certain kinds of interaction highly elliptical expressions are regularly used. The following self-contained conversation for example occurred in a recent German film:

- *Frisch gewaschen?*
- *Selbst gebügelt.*

A related technique is to make use of deictic expressions as a substitute for more explicit terms (e.g. nouns), as in:

> *Ich möchte das ... und das ... und das ... zwei bitte ... und das ... ein Kilo ... Danke schön ... Wieviel? ... Auf Wiedersehen*

The following extract from the film *Der Millionen Coup* features some crooks, only one of whom is a native speaker of German. The others make use of 'foreignising' and 'simplification':

- *Das bringen die Zeitung in dem ganzen Land*
- *No ... kein Ähnlichkeit*
- *Nein*
- *No ... niemand erkennt*
- *Ich hab' dich sofort erkannt, Mario, sofort*
- *OK ... es war stupido ... Fehler ... Maske wegnehmen*

DINGSBUMS-ING

This implies the use of verbal 'joker-cards' that carry any meaning that one wants to convey.

If one doesn't know a word in German, say *Dingsbums*; in French say *truc* or *machin*; in English *whatsit* and in Scots *thingumyjig*.

In the example below, the teacher is reminding the class of this particular achievement strategy:

- *Wenn sie das Wort nicht kennt, was kann sie sagen? ...*
- *Dingsbums ...*
- *Dingsbums, ja ... Du verstehst Dingsbums? ...*

GENERALISATION

This implies the use of a known general term when a specific term is not known: *oiseaux* instead of *moineaux*; *fleurs* instead of *marguerites*; *Fische* instead of *Karpfen*.

PARAPHRASE

This implies the use of circumlocution in not necessarily correct foreign language in order to substitute for an unknown word or phrase: *l'homme qui regarde les tickets sur le train* instead of *le contrôleur*; *la dame qui prend votre argent au supermarché* instead of *la caissière*; *ich habe einen Vogel, der kann sprechen* for *ich habe einen Papagei*.

A waiter in a Chinese restaurant, who either did not know the term 'vegetarian' or who was unable to pronounce it, pointed to that section of the menu and said:

- *For who no like meat.*

The following sign was noted outside another foreign-language restaurant:

- *Open seven days a week, except Tuesdays.*

A Russian dissident poetess who had experienced a period of confinement said in a TV news interview:

- *We got food ... the day plus one ...*
- *Every other day?*
- *Every other day ...*

I'VE STARTED SO I'LL FINISH

Very often when talking in L1 we find ourselves launching into an utterance without knowing exactly how we are going to finish it. Indeed, we may wish to change the utterance on the way, depending on the visual or other feedback we receive to our first few words.

For young persons to employ this strategy even in their L1 requires considerable confidence - in their command of vocabulary and structure; in their ability to handle anything that suddenly happens as they are talking; in their command of discourse-markers that will modify meanings as they go along and connect one point to another.

A 'reducer' will be unlikely to launch into the unknown in this way. Even 'achievers' will have difficulty, but at least they will be more willing to make the attempt. Relevant classroom activities would consist of requiring learners to talk spontaneously and at some length about topics that were suddenly presented to them, e.g.:

- *Je crois que je préfère Madonna ... parce que ... parce qu'elle ... eh ... elle chante bien ... son musique est très forte ... et ... elle ... j'aime bien ses vidéos ... elle est très cool ... et je la trouve très .... dynamique ... elle fait des gestes ... comme ça ...*

The Student's Guide to *En fin de compte* underlines the importance of 'riding it out':

> If memory fails you, or you lose your place in your notes, learn to 'fill in' as you find your place again. Total silence is worse than a ...

- *Tiens! Si vous permettez, je vais vite retrouver ma place dans mes notes. Bon, ce que j'allais vous dire, c'est ...*

RESTARTS AND APPROXIMATIONS

Even native speakers sometimes find that they have made an inappropriate start to an utterance - in which case they may go back to the beginning and start again, as in a surrealist incident in the film *Péril en la demeure*:

- *Les assassins ... ça vous fait ... pardon ... j'allais dire ... je recommence ... les assassins ... pardon ... je recommence ... vous aimez les assassins?*

In the same way, foreign language 'achievers' will be prepared to try again, whereas 'reducers' will be more likely to give up after only one attempt.

In addition, 'achievers' will be prepared to indicate that they have approximately but not totally communicated the meaning they had in mind - giving their interlocutor an opportunity to contribute if that is possible.

These two strategies are well exemplified by Karin, a young model, in *Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant*, as she tells Petra of her father's hard times.

She begins inappropriately and so 're-starts':

Papa hat viel gesoffen ... und ... nein, das ist falsch erzählt, weil ... eines Tages haben sie zu Papa gesagt in der Firma ...

then almost immediately she expresses an 'approximation':

'Da ist kein Platz für Leute in Ihrem Alter' ... also genau weiß ich's nicht ... da bin ich nicht dabei gewesen ... aber ungefähr war es so ...

ESTABLISH FOREIGN IDENTITY

When talking with persons unknown, it will often help if a learner quickly lets them know that he is not a native speaker of the foreign language. The learner is signalling willingness to participate in the conversation but as a matter of courtesy as well as self-interest is establishing certain helpful understandings.

Native speakers of a foreign language are often willing to take account of the fact that they are talking to a foreigner.

In *Diva*, the young postman Jules has just explained to the black American opera singer Cynthia Hawkins that he went all the way to Munich on what he and his friends in their casual everyday language call a 'mob', in order to see her perform, but then he immediately realises that she will not understand what a 'mob' is:

- *Vous avez fait le voyage pour moi seule?*
- *Oui, en mob ... enfin en mobylette.*

It is now time to refer back briefly to the reduction strategy 'Retreat before the flood' (p66). ... In fact, the lady in question did not 'retreat before the flood'. She stood her ground and slowly explained to the shopkeeper that she was Scots. It transpired that the shopkeeper had thought she was French not only because of her good accent but also because she had a glorious suntan and a new hair-style in the current French mode. So, a pleasant and fairly lengthy conversation ensued in which the shopkeeper adapted her language to suit her interlocutor.

In consequence, an 'achiever' who quickly establishes foreign identity is likely to receive more 'charged' input than a 'reducer' whose first instinct is to avoid close encounters of this kind.

APPEAL FOR REPAIR OR CONFIRMATION

When talking in a foreign language, an 'achiever' will not hesitate to appeal to interlocutors for assistance.

- *Comment est-ce qu'on dit 'sailing'?*
- *Ich habe zwei ... Brüders ...? Ach so, Brüder, danke schön ...*

This strategy applies to native speakers too, and it can often be effected non-verbally by pausing in order to allow the interlocutor to complete the utterance. In the film *Diabolo Menthe*, for example, Frédérique is talking to the father of a friend who has run away from home. She cannot think how to complete her utterance:

- *Mais c'est tellement injuste ... vous êtes tellement ...*
- *Tellement quoi? ... tellement rien du tout ... tellement seule.*

Allowing the other person to complete the utterance is a useful tactic when sensitivity is required, as in the film *La mort en ce jardin*:

- *Ecoutez ... si on ne se revoit plus ...*
- *Eh bien?*
- *Je pensais que vous étiez seulement ...*
- *... un bandit?*

In *Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant*, Sidonie wants to ask a delicate question but stops halfway, in order to allow Petra to complete it herself in her own way if she so chooses:

- *Hat er ...?*
- *Nein, er hat mich nicht belogen.*

In the same film Karin, who has returned to Germany after a long absence, meets Petra for the first time. She is not quite sure how to express herself, so she appeals for confirmation:

- *Ich hatte Sie mir viel älter vorgestellt ... viel ... ... distinguierter ... sagt man so?*
- *Man sagt so.*

In *Poulet au vinaigre*, the police inspector appeals for 'repair', then 'copes' by himself:

- *Je souffre aussi de ... comment vous l'appelez? ... de paranoia aigü*

INITIATE REPAIR

When a learner fails to understand exactly what a speaker says but has some idea of what is intended, it may be appropriate to initiate repair by offering an interpretation of the speaker's meaning:

- *Est-ce que vous voulez dire que ...?*
- *Wenn ich Sie richtig verstehe, sagen Sie, daß.....?*

INITIATE CONNECTIONS

This strategy is not designed to get round an obstacle in communication. It simply serves to make the most of a situation by establishing connections between input and personal experience:

Pardon, madame, ... mais c'est un peu comme ... la Bretagne, n'est-ce pas? ...

Monsieur, ... ma famille et moi ... nous avons visité Bordeaux l'année dernière ... et nous avons vu ...

In the course of an oral test with a sixth-former, the conversation moved on to *Le noeud de vipères*, and it was pleasing to find the student connecting the theme of family aggravations to her own experience:

- *C'est un peu comme chez nous ... dans notre famille.*

At lower levels within the school there are equally good examples. A class was given the task of making up a role-play conversation based on a hotel. Most groups situated the hotel in France. One group, however, decided that it would not be a hotel abroad, but rather one in Scotland in which two pupils would act as receptionists taking telephone calls from persons in France who wished to find out about the town and region, to indicate their requirements for rooms and to make reservations. The receptionists had available to them in their native language (English) brochures about the region plus information-sheets about the particular hotel and others in its chain throughout the country. In consequence they had a wealth of ideas deriving directly from their personal experience of life that they were able to feed into the role-play.

SMALL ELEMENTS FOR ADDED MEANING

In *La mort en ce jardin* Simone Signoret and a priest are struggling through the Amazonian rain-forest. She says:

- *Je ne suis qu'une femme. Je suis toute seule.*

The *Ne* ... *Que* and the *Toute* do not constitute the core of her utterance but they certainly give it an important dimension of added meaning, enabling her to weave a particular spell that she had in mind.

Learners oriented to achievement will often wish to 'fine-tune' their meanings by making use of expressions of this sort.

Two sixth-formers:

- La Peste ... *oui* ... *je l'aime beaucoup* ... *mais quelquefois* ... *je la trouve un peu ennuyeuse.*

- *Pour la plupart je crois que* ... *Inès* ... *est une femme damnée* ... *mais aussi* ... *elle est beaucoup plus intelligente que les autres.*

Another way of adding refinements of meaning is to list a number of possibilities centering round one particular point, as in *La mort en ce jardin*:

- *On ne sait pas a quoi on a a faire* ... *c'est peut-etre des indiens sauvages* ... *ou des bagnards évadés* ...
- *Pourquoi penser au pire?*
- *C'est peut-être des explorateurs* ... *des gens de bonne volonté* ...

ACHIEVEMENT STRATEGIES: BEFORE AND AFTER THE EVENT

PLAN OPTIONAL PATHWAYS

Communication implies coming to terms with unpredictability. One way of achieving this is to rely on 'coping' strategies during the event. Another way is to plan in advance. There is no point in devising a plan that is rigidly set, however, because if events turn out somewhat differently from what was envisaged, then the plan will not be of much use. The plan therefore has to be flexible.

In the current school curriculum much attention is paid to problem-solving, but little is said about the strategies that learners might employ in order to solve problems.

Research on problem-solving[9] indicates differences between low-level and high-level approaches.

Means-end analysis

A useful fairly low-level approach, called means-end analysis, consists of leaping quickly into the problem. Learners may have a general sense of direction which enables them to work towards the solution. At regular intervals they take stock of where they are in relation to the goal. This represents a practical, workshop approach.

If-then files

Higher-level problem solvers on the other hand do not leap quickly into the problem. Instead they analyse its internal structure, looking at it flexibly from different directions, until they find a match between their representation of the problem structure and the solution to a similar problem that is stored in their long-term memory. They then summon the solution 'ready-made' from their memory. It may have to be adapted in some ways in order to make it fully compatible with the current problem. Nonetheless, this is a different process from means-end analysis.

One possible basis for solving problems in the higher-order manner consists of drawing on IF-THEN files from one's long-term memory. These are files of what has been called procedural knowledge.

To take one example - in a simple tourist transaction in which a tourist wishes to purchase a pair of gloves, the following if-then procedures could be relevant:

Go to shop

IF see gloves, THEN try them on
IF not see gloves, THEN pass by

IF gloves fit, THEN check price
IF gloves not fit, THEN hand back

IF price acceptable, THEN purchase
IF price not acceptable, THEN not purchase

To take another example, this time at a higher level - a candidate in a sixth-form oral test:

IF asked about topics A, B, C (well known),
THEN talk at length, expressing personal viewpoint

IF asked about topics X, Y, Z (not well known),
THEN respond briefly, or try to generalise,
or ask questions,
or try to sow seeds of topics A, B, C (because examiners often wish to follow rather than lead candidates)

If-then procedures such as those above are very simple and not intended to represent the complexity of real decision-making. Their advantage lies in their capacity to help learners predict the main possibilities that might arise and to work out in advance how each might be dealt with if in fact it does arise. This is very different from rote-learning one hit-or-miss conversation.

SEEK VARIETY OF INPUT AND CONTACT

Achievers will not necessarily restrict their input to what the teacher offers. They may seek input of their own that reflects their interests, needs or intentions, and this may be put at the disposal of their teacher and classmates, e.g. by mentioning the content of a penfriend's letter or by talking about a foreign-language comic or other text they have read privately.

In addition, they may identify topics within their own L1 culture that are of personal interest, e.g. tropical fish, postage stamps, sports, and set about learning how to handle them, receptively and productively, in the foreign language.

Underlying this approach is the assumption that learning will improve to the extent that learners, rather than relying totally on the teacher, ask themselves what they should be learning and how they should set about learning it.

REVIEW PERFORMANCE

Learners might review their performance alone, or they might seek the views of peers, teachers or others.

The review may bear upon what was said or written, how appropriately or correctly the learners performed, how performance might be improved.

Often it will be based on recall, but advanced modern courses are now building in sessions in which learners are encouraged to have their performance audio - or video-recorded, and to use the recording as a basis for review. This point is further developed in Chapter 10. Advantages of this approach are that fewer demands are made on recall, the cassette can be stopped at any time to allow discussion to take place, and learners can look more objectively at what they said or did.

ACHIEVEMENT STRATEGIES AND COGNITIVE STYLE

As the commitment to implementing a learner-centred approach grows, it becomes increasingly important to reflect on how learners think, hence the current interest in cognitive style. This is too broad a topic to discuss in these pages, but two dimensions of cognitive style may be pertinent to present purposes.

a. REFLECTIVE AND IMPULSIVE LEARNERS

The reflective learner:

> 'tends to make fewer errors than the impulsive, particularly on challenging and difficult tasks, since he shows a strong desire to be right first time, and

> seems to tolerate the ambiguity, say, of a long silence in front of the class while he thinks of the right answer before responding.'[10]

Impulsive learners on the other hand:

> 'adopt a shotgun approach, firing off answers in the hope that one will be right and that in any case errors will provide appropriate feedback from the teacher and help them to get nearer the solution the next time.'[11]

It is likely that impulsive learners would favour the lower-level problem-solving approach described earlier in this section as 'means-end analysis'. They would launch straight into a problem and use their 'coping' strategies in order to negotiate their way through it.

Reflective learners would be rather more likely to fine-tune by planning before the event and by calmly reviewing matters during it, e.g. by drawing on procedural knowledge encoded in IF-THEN files, and by reflecting afterwards on what had happened. At the same time, however, and not in keeping with the definition of the reflective learner given above, at least some of them would be prepared to develop hypotheses about meaning and to test them out in interaction with others, even if the hypothesis were shown to be in need of subsequent modification. It is possible that they may differ from impulsive learners not so much in a wish to avoid being seen to be wrong as in a desire to offer reflective as opposed to impulsive hypotheses.

b. FIELD INDEPENDENT AND FIELD DEPENDENT LEARNERS

Learners with a predisposition to field independence (FI) find it relatively easy to perform the embedded-figures test, which consists of studying a particular geometrical pattern and then identifying it within a larger, more complex pattern (or, field). Field-dependent (FD) learners on the other hand find this more difficult to do. They take their information more globally from the field as a whole. Although the embedded-figures test is one of spatial perception and not of language, some research[12] suggests that FIs are also able to detect pattern within texts, i.e. fields of language, whereas FDs take their information from a more global perception of the context rather than from an analytical perception of the text. In their interpersonal relations, FIs tend to be detached, in a sense independent of the field of human beings around them, and they make sense of things by imposing their own mental patterns on them, a process of cognitive restructuring, whereas FDs integrate more easily into the human field and indeed depend on interaction with others in the field in order to make their sense of things. FIs do it alone in their head, FDs need other people. Research on this area, in its application to foreign-language learning [13], suggests that there may be some connection between FI and linguistic competence, and FD and communicative competence. This is misleading. In the language of the present book, it may be more apprepriate to suggest a possible relation between FI and cognitive-academic language proficiency, and FD and basic interpersonal communication skills.

ACHIEVEMENT STRATEGIES: A CASE STUDY

SIXTH-FORMERS 'COPING' WITH COGNITIVE DEMANDS

Roughly ten years ago, when I first began to act as external oral examiner to sixth-formers in French, there was a wide spread of attainment within the population of candidates, despite the fact that this was the top examination in spoken French within the Scottish school system.

Some candidates were outstanding in all respects - talking fluently, correctly and with impressive range. When asked afterwards if they could explain how their excellent command of the language had come about, they in most cases made the salutory point that their teacher rarely if ever spoke French with them. Two things that they did do were to read a great deal and to talk to themselves.

Other candidates were very poor. Strained pauses were frequent, and in some cases there was prolonged silence and even tears.

In recent years the picture has changed. The top pupils are still outstandingly good, though no better than their counterparts were ten years ago. The weakest pupils on the other hand are much better. A communicative approach, however imperfectly applied, has made a difference.

One characteristic of the talk of many present-day candidates is their willingness to make use of achievement strategies, even though they may be unfamiliar with the term.

Rather than talk correctly, but at the cognitive level of (say) a twelve-year-old, they talk at times incorrectly but at the cognitive level of the intelligent seventeen-year-olds that they are.

Below are set out some examples of the strategies that they actually used, in which mistakes intermingle with correct usage. The examples are based on notes taken quickly after each interview:

Restarts and approximations

- *Tandis que ... ah non ... excusez-moi ... dans* Le Grand Meaulnes *il s'agit de ...*

- *Le terrorisme ... euh ... c'est quelque chose qui ... euh ... qu'est-ce que je peux dire? ... alors qui ...*

- *A mon avis je pense que ... oui ... un peu ... ils considèrent le violence comme ... euh ... comme ...*

Appeal for repair

One candidate gave a lengthy answer to a question, then:

- *Zut! J'ai oublié la question! ... Pouvez-vous la répéter, s'il vous plaît?*

- *J'ai un inconditionnel ... oui? ... pour Jordanhill*
- *Je préfère les romans mystér ... mystér ... mystérieux ... oui? ...*
- *Il pense que la religion est hypocri ... hypocri ... hypocrise ... hypocrite ... oui?*

Foreignising / word-coinage / code-switching

- *L'histoire, c'était une mystérie*
- *Il a parlé au suject des assassinations*
- *Je veux étudier le médecin*
- *Je l'ai lu avec beaucoup d'intéresse*
- *Il est devenu christian*
- *C'est obligataire pour ...*
- *Il y avait un désasteur de ferry*
- *Je préfère le camping ... il y a plus de naturalité*
- *Je suis très attractée par ...*
- *Je vais aller au collège de technologique*

Sometimes students - no doubt those taking two foreign languages - code-switched, but not into English:

- *Elle était si perfekt*
- *Nous avons passé trois semaines en Österreich.*

Simplification

- *J'ai née ici*
- *Les gens qui vend leurs produits*
- *Si j'aime une personne et la personne n'aime pas moi ...*

Initiate connections

While discussing a particular text, one candidate said:

- *Je trouve ça tres interessante ... parce que je vais faire les études audio-visuelles à Glasgow*

Another, commenting on a particular situation in a set text, said:

- *A mon avis ça ressemble à Châteauvallon ... que je regarde deux fois par semaine à la télévision.*

Of course, it would have been better if there had been fewer mistakes, but two points might be made strongly in favour of these learners, bearing in mind that they were engaged in spontaneous communication for a serious purpose:

First, they were focused on meaning, more than on form. It is not possible to focus equally on both at the same time. The at times incorrect lexical and structural forms that they expressed were a spontaneous reflection of their internalised rather than conscious knowledge of rules. If the conversations had been audio-recorded, which of course they were not, the pupils would have been able to focus on meaning and on form separately, by listening on two or more occasions. Undoubtedly they themselves would have identified some if not all of their mistakes, leading to a more finely-tuned performance on a subsequent occasion.

Second, the conversation tasks made demands on cognitive-academic language proficiency, i.e. on something more than basic interpersonal communication skills. Had the cognitive level been lowered, far fewer mistakes would have been made. In an oral test of this sort it is permissible for the interlocutor to follow the candidate, in which case candidates could to some extent have chosen to converse at the lower level. Instead, they deliberately took the high road. It is to their credit that they were prepared to take risks in order to express a range of intelligent meanings.

La fortune saurit aux audacieux

CHAPTER SIX

LEARNERS : PROFICIENCY

This chapter is in four sections:

Section 1
discusses the notion of foreign-language proficiency, and in particular deals with two possible types:

- basic interpersonal communication skills
- cognitive-academic language proficiency

Section 2
If learners are to become 'proficient' in either of the senses outlined above, then they must internalise a system of rules. Section 2 presents two possible processes of internalisation and discusses how they might be harmonised:

- natural acquisition
- learning by means of consciousness-raising and automatisation

Section 3
discusses what a teacher might do, in the light of Section 2, in order to help pupils develop their basic interpersonal communication skills and their cognitive-academic language proficiency

Section 4
discusses the extent to which the two types of foreign-language proficiency might be related.

TWO TYPES OF FOREIGN-LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

In earlier chapters a distinction was drawn between two kinds of language proficiency:

* basic interpersonal communication skills
* cognitive-academic language proficiency.

The terms derive from research on bilingualism[1], and so their application to foreign-language learning cannot be taken for granted. This chapter then represents an initial attempt to find out if they provide insight into the nature of foreign-language proficiency.

Basic interpersonal communication skills

BICS implies interactive, contextualised language use in which language is only one of the elements within the context that carry meaning, with priority given to listening and speaking but also including certain types of reading and writing.

The kinds of classroom activity featuring at this level and often involving simulation or role-play could include:

- tourist transactions (e.g. checking into a hotel)
- penfriend visits (e.g. having a meal with the penfriend's family)
- making arrangements (e.g. deciding on which film to watch)
- personal interviews (e.g. a footballer being interviewed after a match)
- managing the class (e.g. organising group activity)
- playing games (e.g. Loto)
- performing skill activities (e.g. making puppets).

Reading and writing would be geared to elements such as signs, notices, menus, letters, postcards, adverts and lists, and would often be a springboard for interactive oral activity, e.g. reading a menu and then placing an order with the waiter.

Much of what is required for Standard Grade and GCSE falls into this category. In order to perform well, learners would need to possess some degree of social competence and conversational management, e.g. knowing when and when not to interrupt during conversations. Achievement strategies, particularly those of the 'coping' variety, would help greatly to sustain the flow of interpersonal communication.

Cognitive-academic language proficiency

CALP implies the use of language across all four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, disciplined by a marked degree of cognitive planning in order to achieve decontextualised communication in which language, as opposed to non-verbal forms, carries the main burden of meaning at the level of sustained discourse, as pupils both engage in sustained interaction with others and produce and comprehend extended passages on their own.

Activities featuring at this level could include:

- reporting
- persuading
- studying literary and other cognitively demanding texts
- discussing
- debating

- writing essays or articles.

It is clear that in order to perform well at this level, learners must be able by themselves to create significant stretches of coherent discourse.

Let it be stated at once that CALP takes a long time to develop even in one's L1. Many undergraduate and postgraduate students of science at university, for example, find it difficult to write a coherent essay. Few if any pupils, however talented, will possess a highly developed CALP in a foreign language even after six or seven years study at school, and indeed many teachers will be in a similar position. So, it is not a question of setting CALP as an attainable objective but rather of making a positive start in that direction.

A pertinent point to bear in mind is that the nature of errors made by learners changes as their proficiency develops. As learners progress through BICS their command of structure, especially phrase/sentence structure, increases until they reach the point at which they can interact fluently and with few structural mistakes. As they move into CALP, however, they have to come to terms with new structural forms, but more importantly with new kinds of meaning, and in consequence the mistakes that they make tend to be semantic rather than structural in nature, a tendency suggested by research into the performance of students at university[2].

It is therefore misleading to argue that the higher the level of proficiency the fewer the mistakes. Pupils who are grappling with CALP may often make more mistakes than those who are demonstrating their command of BICS - a perception that thus far has tended to elude the specification of grade-related criteria for the new forms of national assessment but which no doubt will be incorporated as the system evolves. Ultimately, the phonological, structural and semantic system that underlies CALP will be internalised to the point that mistakes tend not to be made, but for many that happy state is as remote as *die blaue Blume in der Ferne*, the object of ineffable longing of the German romantic soul.

Levels of proficiency in the accomplishment of oral tasks

Research in oral performance in L1 conducted in Scotland among learners at secondary school[3] indicates four levels of speaking activity - 'conversational', 'static', 'dynamic' and 'abstract' - that may be relevant to the present distinction between basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive-academic language proficiency. Within the population of learners, which ranged from high to low academic achievers, no significant differences were found when they participated in 'conversational' activities. Some differences began to emerge when they were asked to perform 'static' tasks, and the differences became even more evident when it came to 'dynamic' and 'abstract' tasks.

In the 'conversational' activities the pupils were mainly focused on the other person, and interpersonal meanings were built up from the interaction between them.

In the 'static' and 'dynamic' tasks on the other hand the focus was less on interacting with another person and more on organising information to be communicated. The difference between the two was that in 'static' tasks the variables remained the same during the task, e.g. describing a photograph, whereas in 'dynamic' tasks the variables changed, e.g. describing a film where characters enter and leave the scene and one event leads into another. Dynamic tasks require a cognitive planning ability and the requisite language competence that imposes coherence on something that is in a state of change.

It is likely that most 'conversational' activities fall into the category of basic interpersonal communication skills, and that 'dynamic' and 'abstract' tasks draw at least in part on cognitive-academic language proficiency.

INTERNALISING RULES

One of the main building blocks for spoken language is the global phrase. As speakers converse, they exchange global phrases of varying length, often stringing a number of them together, in order together to construct a larger block - the dialogue. The term 'global phrase' does not imply parroting, since there is enormous scope for creativity - by adding or subtracting from the phrase or by modifying elements at particular slots within it.

To make such modifications, learners must have internalised a functional, operational knowledge of an underlying system of rules. How this operational system is developed is a matter of continuing controversy.

One view[4] claims that operational knowledge is internalised by a natural process of 'acquisition' through attempting to engage in acts of real communication in which the focus is on meanings rather than on forms. It attaches less importance to 'learning' rules explicitly, though it recognises that this latter process is useful in helping learners to monitor their and others' output.

On this view, new structures are 'acquired', not in the order in which they may be taught by a teacher, or consciously learnt by a learner, following a carefully sequenced and graded teaching syllabus, but rather according to an internal formula that we are born with. It is not so much a case of internalising an external syllabus as of allowing our internal syllabus to unfold, the mechanism being triggered off by attempts to focus on meaning and to make input comprehensible.

A second view[5] claims that explicit knowledge not only helps us to monitor output but also to internalise the operational system of rules in the first place.

It is not the intention of the present chapter to present these two views as irreconcilable opposites, but rather to suggest that the first view, based on natural acquisition, is insufficient in itself but is nonetheless an important element within the broader and more securely grounded second view.

NATURAL ACQUISITION

Just how the complex process of natural acquisition is believed to function internally is not the object of the present chapter. Instead, an attempt will be made to outline certain factors that appear to be connected with it.

Let me give two real-life examples:

First, a five-year-old family friend called Carol and I were playing on a beach in France. In the distance we noticed a stall being erected. On examination it proved to be a puppet show, the well-known *Guignol Lyonnais*. Within a few minutes over a hundred noisy French youngsters were sitting on the sand, watching the puppets in action - among them Carol. Even though she does not understand any French, she thoroughly enjoyed the performance. Six months later, back in Scotland, her mother took her to an inter-school volleyball competition at a local sports stadium. The scene bore some resemblance to the puppet show in that there was an element of theatrical competition, with lots of noisy youngsters in the audience supporting one side or the other. Never a person to be outdone, Carol joined in the vociferations. Her mother at first thought she was calling out something like 'fuzzy' - which seemed strange. On closer inspection it turned out to be 'Vas-y!' which is what the French youngsters had been calling out on the beach six months previously.

The implicit operational 'rule' that had been 'picked up' was a combination of lexical and social usage, i.e. call out 'fuzzy' when at a spectacle along with other noisy youngsters.

Second, a schoolteacher friend recently explained to me that in his first two years as a pupil at school he had not been particularly distinguished in French. During the summer between years two and three he had spent a month with a French family. In the first three weeks he said nothing except 'oui', 'non' and 'peut-être' (silent period again), though he was taking a lot in. In the final week more language began to come out (self-initiated). From that point onwards his French improved considerably. Reflecting on his experience, he still insists that the language system which he had naturally picked up during his four weeks in France and which he could 'operate' was fundamentally different from the 'descriptive' system that he had been attempting to learn in his first two years at school.

Factors relevant to the natural process

Incidents like these, particularly the first, suggest certain factors as being important:

- a 'silent period' with a considerable delay between input and output, with the output, when it comes, being self-initiated;

- a lack of 'hang-up', enabling the learner to relax and enjoy the experience without feeling threatened by public ridicule for failing to comprehend or produce;

- vividness and intensity of experience, i.e. the *Guignol* and the volleyball;

- a perceived match between the two experiences, both of which were highly contextualised, enabling transfer to take place;

- a prior focus on meaning rather than on linguistic form.

In other words, mere exposure to language at the puppet show was not enough. So far as exposure is concerned, however, two key factors influencing acquisition must be intensity and frequency of exposure.

'Intensity' has been seen[6] as comprising:

- colour v black
- well-intoned v monotonous
- containing emotional depth
- having long-term implications for the individual
- having breadth of association in the learner's mind

and as regards 'frequency':

- distributed exposure (i.e. a lot of a little) being preferable to massed exposure (i.e. a little of a lot).

Natural acquisition in the classroom

To what extent do pupils at school 'pick up' rules of the system when attempting to engage in communication in the classroom? This after all is a very different context from 'real life' in the foreign country.

One of the action-research studies conducted within the CI project[7] investigated this question by sampling lessons with one particular first-year mixed-ability class over a span of eighteen weeks, with the intention of finding out whether pupils had internalised those aspects of everyday functional classroom language that the teacher systematically used in order to 'run' the class in French but did not formally teach. The results on the whole were cautionary. Most pupils picked up meanings at a simple functional level but not with much degree of precision. This suggests that in classroom conditions it may take a considerable time before a refined version of the language system has been 'picked up' by natural means.

Assisting the natural process

Two possible ways of helping the acquisition process to operate more effectively might be for teachers to make use of problem-creating as opposed to problem-reducing strategies, on the grounds that the first sort will offer pupils more of a challenge to construct their own meanings; and to harness the potential impact of video and microcomputers, on the grounds that both can provide high intensity of contextualised experience, (one of the factors suggested above as being relevant to the acquisition process) and that it is now possible for learners to engage in communicative interaction with them, albeit in ways that differ from their interactions with a teacher.

However, it is not suggested that the natural process of picking up rules as one goes along is the sole means of developing basic interpersonal communication skills, either in real-life or in school conditions.

Limitations of the natural process

In informal contexts outside school, members of groups whose L1 is not English often acquire by natural means a functional command of English, but in some cases only up to a point. In order to communicate more effectively, with an appropriate degree of range, fluency and accuracy, many of them find it helpful to have contact with a tutor who will discuss important rules and give them structured opportunities to put them into practice.

In the inevitably more formal setting of school classrooms, given powerful constraints such as

- limited time available
- ratio of some 25 pupils to one teacher
- the fact that one is dealing with a foreign and not a second language
- manifest pressure to produce results quickly

it would not be possible to create the same facilitating conditions for natural acquisition (despite its limitations, as revealed above) as exist in informal settings. From a norm of less than 2% real communication as observed in the late 1970's with first-year heterogeneous classes[8], genuinely communicative classroom activity would have to increase possibly to over 50% if the acquisition process were to have much chance, but in addition - since mere exposure is not enough - it would be important to ensure that the other salient factors (silent period, lack of hang-up, vividness/intensity of experience, perceived match, focus on meaning) were incorporated into classroom procedures. Even at present, it is doubtful if in many cases real communication, as opposed to functional rehearsal, exceeds 20%.

Latent communicative competence

Despite the value of creating contexts in which pupils can acquire rules when engaging in attempts at communication, the acquisition view fails to explain why in the past many excellent foreign-language learners succeeded in developing a high degree of at least latent communicative competence by means that may have had as much to do with formal learning as with acquisition. They may not have engaged in much interactive communication in class, but when eventually on leaving school after six or seven years of formal study they went to a foreign country, they were able to communicate well - often after a short period of embarrassment. Formal learning at school had helped them to develop a high degree of latent communicative competence which eventually was speedily activated when the context was right.

At the same time, however, before looking for something beyond the 'natural acquisition' approach, it should be borne in mind that there is more to the development of foreign-language proficiency than what can be achieved by formal analytical learning alone. The major tradition of foreign-language teaching in the UK has undoubtedly over-intellectualised matters, which produces its own disadvantages, including large numbers of drop-outs and many so-called 'successful' learners scarred for life by hang-ups about spontaneous interaction.

The more persuasive second view[9] attaches importance to two complementary processes, consciousness-raising and automatisation, which in different ways relate implicit and explicit knowledge of rules.

CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING

In processing authentic spoken or written texts, learners will often simply be attempting to extract meaning. In so doing, they may possibly 'acquire' implicit knowledge of certain new rules that underlie the text, without at the time possessing explicit knowledge of what these rules are. An 'acquired' rule is one that has been internalised to the point of being operational in spontaneous communication.

It is important to be clear about this. Many pupils, confronted by the demands of national examinations, work very hard in order to build their competence up to a point that enables them to perform fairly well - but a week or so after the examination their competence begins to regress. That is, they have not really 'acquired' or 'internalised' the rules that for a short while they were able to make use of for examination purposes.

An 'acquired' rule is one that has been more fully internalised. This does not mean that it is necessarily a fully-fledged rule of the sort operated by mature native speakers. It may be that a rule develops over time, beginning as a simple two-word structure and progressively becoming more elaborated.

If a particular 'acquired' rule is encountered or used often enough by learners who have become used to hypothesising about how language works, then their consciousness of it may be raised, converting it from implicit to explicit knowledge. This is an important process in L1 development, in that we acquire a highly complex rule system long before we can describe it in explicit terms. Once, however, we have raised our consciousness of the system that we operate, we may possibly be able to make it function even more efficiently than before.

Thus far, consciousness-raising has been understood as a process whereby implicit, naturally acquired rules may be made more explicit, allowing learners to exercise a greater degree of conscious control over their use of language.

Consciousness-raising may also be understood as a process whereby learners gain explicit knowledge of rules that they have not yet acquired naturally. In this sense, consciousness-raising may lead to the process of automatisation that is discussed later in this section.

Techniques of consciousness-raising

Below, three possible techniques of consciousness-raising of this second sort are outlined:

a. LEARNING FROM EXPLANATIONS

The teacher or some other person explains rules (of vocabulary, phrase/sentence structure, discourse structure, social usage, communication strategy) to the class.

The rules may arise from

- course-book material
- other texts (spoken or written)
- classroom interaction

The explanation might be

- deductive, i.e. discussion of rules tending to precede study of examples in context
- inductive, i.e. discussion tending to follow examples in context

The discussion could be

- teacher-led, with the teacher doing most of the informing
- discursive, with pupils asking and answering questions, and indeed providing their own explanations

The discussion could be conducted in

- L1
- the foreign language (a development noted with satisfaction by HMIS)

b. DISCOVERING RULES FOR ONESELF

When reading an authentic text that contains rules with which they are not familiar, learners might form hypotheses concerning some or all of these rules, or they might simply consult a reference book.

It is likely that at some point they would take 'their' rule to the teacher for confirmation.

Increasingly, teachers are encouraging pupils to compile their own note-books of rules, e.g.

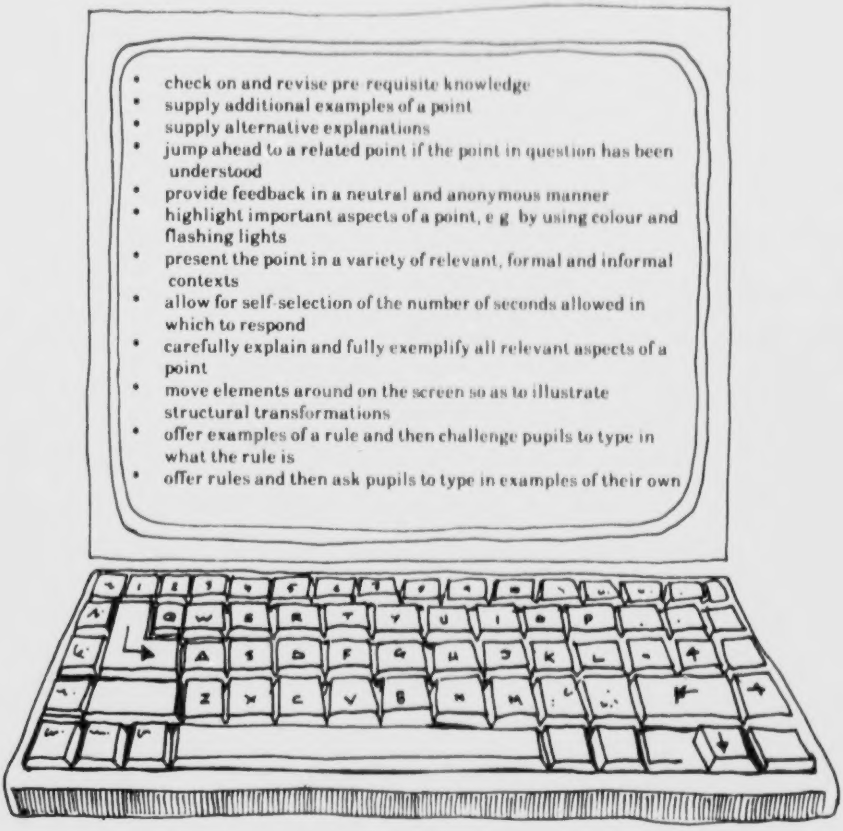
- What I have learnt about German grammar
- What I find helpful when doing role-play
- When I am stuck for something to say I can ... ...

The hypothesis-testing approach implied in this section goes well with the application of interactive achievement strategies. If for example a pupil has formulated a hypothesis concerning the conditional tense in French - that it consists of the infinitive plus certain endings - then they might experiment by creating new utterances incorporating this hypothesis. This may lead to correct utterances such as *Je visiterais Paris* but also to incorrect utterances such as *J'allerais aux Champs-Elysées*. By scanning their interlocutor's reactions for feedback, or by explicitly inviting this, they are constantly on the alert for possibilities of modifying existing hypotheses as to how the language works.

c. INTERACTING WITH A COMPUTER, IN PURSUIT OF ROLES

Pupils may interact with computers in order to enhance both their explicit knowledge and their operational command of rules.

A suitably programmed computer can, for example[10]:



- check on and revise pre-requisite knowledge
- supply additional examples of a point
- supply alternative explanations
- jump ahead to a related point if the point in question has been understood
- provide feedback in a neutral and anonymous manner
- highlight important aspects of a point, e g by using colour and flashing lights
- present the point in a variety of relevant, formal and informal contexts
- allow for self-selection of the number of seconds allowed in which to respond
- carefully explain and fully exemplify all relevant aspects of a point
- move elements around on the screen so as to illustrate structural transformations
- offer examples of a rule and then challenge pupils to type in what the rule is
- offer rules and then ask pupils to type in examples of their own

Computers do not, however, interact with pupils in the same way as teachers do. They are unable, for example, to interpret a pupil's non-verbal signs; nor in processing a pupil's verbal signs can they (at present at least) interpret such sub-text as may exist, i.e. read between the lines; nor can they match the capacity of human beings to spontaneously relate pupil output to some relevant aspect of past experience (the pupil's or someone else's). In short, computers perform some tasks better than teachers, and others less well.

Software need not deal exclusively with rules of phrase or sentence structure, for there are already impressive examples of programmes geared to the social use of language. In one such programme[11], called *Apologies*, users are asked to decide on the most appropriate ways of apologising for lateness on different sorts of occasion such as dinner at home, a birthday party, a business appointment, a cinema show or a job interview. The programme provides possible apologies, and learners must decide how appropriate they would be for the particular purpose and context in which they are offered.

Clearly the three 'explicit' approaches outlined above allow for many variations, but what they have in common is that they encourage learners in one way or another to represent certain rules explicitly to themselves.

It is not possible to argue a strong case for any one of the three approaches as being superior to the other two. Clearly, the middle one in which the learner plays an active decision-making role has much to commend it, but at present it is doubtful if there is evidence to suggest that all eggs should be put in that particular basket. There is evidence[12] to suggest that some learners successfully retain and subsequently exploit rules if these are clearly explained and exemplified by means of a deductive approach. In the circumstances a pragmatic 'pick and mix' approach based on the judgements of teacher and learners seems most appropriate.

AUTOMATISATION

When new rules are represented explicitly to the self, at first the process of applying them is likely to be slow, but over time as they are encountered and applied in subsequent spoken or written texts, speed of processing increases, i.e. their application gradually becomes 'automatised'. Sooner or later they will become part of learners' unconscious, operational knowledge. In some cases, learners may actually forget what the automatised rule is but still continue to operate it correctly. In other cases they will be able to summon it back up into their consciousness, in order to monitor utterances where formal accuracy is particularly important.

Techniques of automatisation

There are several possible techniques that might be adopted, of which one has overwhelmingly been favoured in the past, with less than convincing results.

a. DRILLING

The conventional method of automatisation had its high season when audio-visual courses were the vogue, with pupils being given lots of uncontextualised structural drills. More recently, in the first generation of communicative methodology, pupils have often been given lots of contextualised functional drills, e.g. drilling 'requesting' along with 'agreeing' and 'refusing'. Although it would be wrong to argue that these practices have been unsuccessful, it would be equally wrong to claim that they have substantiated themselves as the best means of 'automatising' rules. One of the dubious assumptions underlying 'drilling' was that patterns should be produced 'fast' from the start, initially without much understanding of their structural composition or their wider contextual application. In fact, this audio-lingual ideal, dubious though it is, was often debased even further in classroom application, because the intended 'fast' production of snappy, conversational model patterns became transformed into an even less meaningful mechanical, choral repetition at half speed, of only partly understood phrases.

In the future, other techniques of drilling may prove more successful, none of them new, based on the assumption that the process will work more effectively if four conditions are fulfilled that were not normally fulfilled in the past:

* build in understanding from the start
* begin slowly, then speed up
* use language 'for real'
* do not reduce the complexity of the activity down to one thing at a time, drilling only those elements requiring automatisation.

If the above conditions are fulfilled, 'practice' language becomes a simplified version of 'real' language whilst retaining some of the essential, dynamic features of real language. It does not degenerate into the mere consolidation of one thing at a time.

Three other techniques are worthy of mention that fulfill some if not all of these conditions:

b. ENQUIRING, THEN SELF-INITIATED REPETITION

It is true that acquisition draws on real communicative language use, but the same can apply to learning. One highly useful 'learning' strategy that young people use is to ask a native-speaker what a particular term means (i.e. they follow the 'achievement strategy' procedure of interacting in pursuit of meaning). Having established what the term means, they repeat it to themselves and to others a number of times, sometimes (like young children) for the sheer pleasure of making the utterance, sometimes fitting it into real conversations.

At present a young Austrian girl and a niece of ours are staying with us, as part of a school exchange. We live in a small rural Scots village, and one of our neighbours happened to say *Och aye* and later *the noo*. The Austrian girl immediately asked in English what these phrases mean. When their meaning was explained, she was delighted to be able to speak in Scots, and spent much of the afternoon introducing *Och aye, the noo* into the general **conversation**. Rather than remain locked in a 'silent period' within the mode of 'natural acquisition', she had been quite prepared to switch briefly into the learning mode and to use her initiative and intelligence in order to establish meaning and then to automatise it. The repetition of the phrase was totally self-initiated, it was fun and was a far remove from choral mechanical repetition in which pupils respond to a stimulus given on cassette or by the teacher. Within two days she has 'learnt' and 'automatised' an interesting range of specific vocabulary and structure. A phrase that came her way from our niece was *Yuk! The squirrel has left a lot of little jobbies on the window-sill*. She enquired about and received explanations of all of the nouns in the phrase, and during the remainder of her stay she made use of them all within a range of contexts of purely natural communication, saying for example *The field has lots of horses' jobbies*. All of this would have passed her by if she had not been prepared to 'enquire and engage in self-initiated repetition'.

c. TAKING NOTE

In comprehension activities geared to authentic texts, spoken or written, pupils take note of the occurrences of new and old rules as and where they notice them. Having processed a text for meaning, scan it for form, identifying different sorts of rule to oneself, e.g. 'What tenses are the verbs in?', 'Where are the examples of agreement?', 'What discourse connectors are used?' In the case of comprehending a video-recording, for example: first, process it fairly quickly for global meaning; then take note of detail, including new forms as well as new meanings; then process it again; and once again.

d. ACCELERATED RECYCLING

In production, deliberately make two or three attempts at roughly the same task at intervals of at least a week. In the first attempt, production is deliberately conducted at a slightly slower rate than normal. In subsequent attempts, speed of production can increase. The first (slow) attempt is geared to maximising 'range' of expression, including the incorporation of relevant newly learnt expressions, with subsequent attempts aiming more at 'fluency' and 'accuracy'. Nothing is being drilled artificially out of context, since the newly learnt expressions are being used 'for real' all of the time.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOREIGN-LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

PROMOTING BICS

In order to promote the development of BICS, it will make sense to engage pupils in:

- a variety of interpersonal communicative activities, allowing as much opportunity as possible for the natural acquisition process (and the subsequent process of consciousness-raising) to take place. It will be helpful if generally a problem-creating approach is adopted in the construction and management of these activities, e.g. 'raising the cognitive level', 'refusal of premature help';

- explicit discussion of relevant aspects of the system of rules that can then undergo a process of automatisation in order to become internalised.

What aspects of the rule-system might be most relevant to BICS?

It might be useful to engage in explicit discussion with pupils on the following:

Achievement strategies

particularly of the 'coping' variety, but also taking account of 'fine-tuning'. This will enable them to 'keep going' in tasks of communication, making the most of and indeed extending the communicative resource at their disposal.

Phrase/sentence structure

especially the rudiments of syntax and intonation. In context-embedded communication, which is the breeding-ground for BICS, morphology is often less important than syntax and intonation. In the phrase *ich sah d Karnevalszug auf d Straß*, for example, the words *den* and *der* have been reduced to *d* and *Straße* to *Straß* - and indeed casual spoken German in certain areas does not mark these morphological forms clearly, if at all. Some grammatical markers are important, e.g. singular-plural, present-past, first-second-third person, though even there the context may of itself provide the necessary meaning, and there may be other non-grammatical devices that achieve the same effect, e.g. the use of *hier* and *demain* rather than tense to indicate particular aspects of past and future time. Other markers are less important for BICS, e.g. many adjective, verb and noun endings. Many morphological and other shortcomings at the level of phrase-sentence structure can to some extent be overcome by the application of 'coping' and 'repair' strategies of achievement. This does not constitute a crusade against morphological accuracy in spoken language, only an argument that it should be classified as desirable rather than essential in basic interpersonal communication, and that in a limited-time curriculum it becomes counter-productive to allocate high priority to it - provided that BICS is indeed the aim.

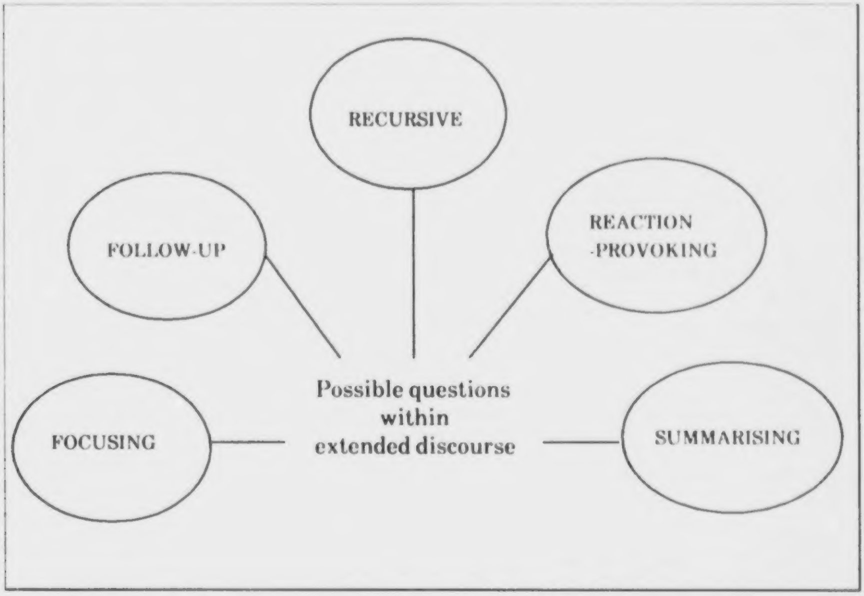
Discourse structure

especially the use of connectors in interaction, covering various discourse functions:

Oui, mais ... / ... n'est-ce pas? / ... non? / Et toi? / Si! / Mais écoute! / Vraiment?
Ja, aber ... / Doch / ..., oder? / Wirklich?

It should not be thought that BICS is limited to interaction by means of a series of crisp, snappy two-liners, each set up by an attractive cue-card. A more extended notion of discourse is essential, a point strongly endorsed by the *Assessment of Performance Unit*[13]:

> *Pupils should have the opportunity to take part in sustained conversations and perform extended tasks of speaking and writing ... Extended, more open-ended tasks provide greater opportunities for pupils to develop their proficiency. They offer wider scope for pupils to apply more independently what knowledge they have, to take the initiative and to develop useful strategies and skills ...*



Let us consider, as one example of what is required in extended discourse, the different types of question that pupils might ask. Clearly, one type would be simple factual questions designed to elicit unknown information. Other types of question at the level of discourse might be:

- follow-up questions, pursuing a point made by the other speaker, allowing the point at present under discussion to be more fully developed. In our research studies we have not seen much evidence of this type, yet it is fundamental to BICS at the level of discourse;

- recursive questions, linking back to points made previously, possibly indicating contradictions or inconsistencies in what the other person has said;

- brief comments, not in question form at all, but designed to provoke a reaction by the other speaker and thereby to uncover information that otherwise might have remained concealed;

- focusing and summarising questions, in which the learner sets the scene for an interaction and then at the end brings together the main points and asks for confirmation.

These are only a sample of the techniques that might be explicitly discussed in class and that might be used by information seekers in order to pursue information in greater depth than can be attained by means of simple self-contained two-line question-answer sequences.

Social usage, including non-verbal communication

not with the aim of going to town on refinements of register or style but rather of helping pupils to avoid behaving in ways that are markedly inappropriate to the context, to the point of becoming disfunctional. To illustrate the above, let us briefly consider some points about interpersonal communication in Japanese made by two speakers[14,15] at a recent conference in London, organised by the Japan Foundation.

First, as regards social usage in the language itself, it is important to be able to distinguish between humble and honorific forms of the language. Additionally, if we western Europeans are asked what we are going to do, one speaker indicated that we might reply *I'm going to read a book*. In Japanese the likelihood would be that this would be considered overly self-conscious and possibly aggressive, because it draws too much attention to the 'I'. It would be more correct to reply *Read a book*. It is also considered good to leave certain sentences uncompleted, so that the interlocutor may complete them, whereas we tend to think that there is something wrong if this happens.

Second, as regards non-verbal communication, eye-contact is used sparingly by Japanese, whereas western Europeans tend to consider lack of eye-contact as being somewhat suspicious. When asking a favour, *a hesitant tone and faltering speech are most appropriate* and it is wrong to apologise *with head held high and back upright*.[16] Instead, it is more appropriate to bow slightly. Furthermore, Japanese have a *habit of constantly emitting a variety of signals of what to us seem like the voicing of agreement; these are, however, merely intended to indicate that the learner is following the argument, while not necessarily agreeing with what is said*.[17] One speaker estimated that an average Japanese speaker produces 400 syllables per minute, and that an average Japanese listener interjects twenty times per minute, i.e. once per twenty syllables. Alternatively, in conversation Japanese listeners may signal their participation by means of *nods, single or multiple, all taking place at breakneck speed*.[18]

Sensitivity to social usage, both verbal and non-verbal, will be essential if learners are to develop basic interpersonal skills. Although we may consider Japanese to be an exotic language, the same holds for languages nearer home. Germans and Italians for example communicate differently in some if not in all aspects of body-language. This is one of the many areas in which satellite television and video are likeiy to make a substantial impact on future approaches to foreign-language learning.

PROMOTING CALP

If the main building block for BICS is the global phrase, employed by two or more persons interacting in order to construct dialogues, other additional building blocks are required for cognitive-academic language proficiency, i.e. the word, the clause, the sentence, the paragraph - all of them contributing to the coherent text, spoken or written, as developed possibly by a number of persons interacting with each other but possibly also by the individual alone. To make progress with CALP, it is important to attend to the careful selection of words, and to the equally important fashioning of words into clauses, clauses into sentences, sentences into paragraphs, and paragraphs into coherent text.

It is unthinkable that pupils could simply 'pick up' by a process of natural acquisition the rule-system that underlies cognitive-academic language proficiency, in which conscious cognitive planning imposes its discipline on the content and manner of linguistic expression. Formal, explicit learning, geared to word selection and to the four areas of rule already mentioned, must surely occur if pupils are to operate in the deliberate, self-conscious manner that CALP requires.

Four areas of conscious reflection might prove useful:

Attending to the monitor

The importance of cognitive planning, before, during and after the event, has already been indicated in the section on 'fine-tuning' strategies of achievement.

Let us consider the monitoring process as it may be applied 'during' the event. Learners may monitor their own output, or the output of others; and they may monitor for form or for meaning.

When monitoring for form, they may attend to structure at different levels of organisation, e.g. word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, overall act of discourse.

When monitoring for meaning, they may attend to the appropriateness of particular words or expressions, or to the effectiveness of particular speech acts (persuasion, reporting, interrogation, explanation, etc) that are intended.

In an attempt at 'persuasion' for example, it may be necessary to monitor the effects of one's first attempt to persuade, in order to judge whether a follow-up attempt will be necessary, and if so to reflect on how the second will differ from the first. This may have to be undertaken during the event, because it may not be possible to depart for a 'time-out' and then return on another occasion.

Similarly, when giving a 'report' or a 'mini-lecture', it may be important to monitor audience reaction in order to make adaptations as one goes along.

All of this requires not only language competence but also cognitive restructuring ability.

How might this monitoring capacity be developed? The final chapter of this book offers a variety of possibilities. One technique might be to interrupt the (say) 'mini-lecture' given by a pupil, in order to prompt discussion on how he or she was faring and to elicit possible options for taking things forward from that point. Another might consist of video-recording the activity, and to stop the play-back at key points in order to review progress and discuss alternatives to what actually occurred, a technique endorsed in the Student's Guide to *En fin de compte*[19]:

> *You should not fail to review your own performance when oral classes can be video-filmed. This allows you to see if your physical posture, audibility and mannerisms are a problem.*

De-coupling comprehension grammar from production grammar

A striking feature of foreign-language course-books, new as well as old, has been their delineation of one single kind of 'common-denominator' grammar that is intended to serve not only spoken and written language in various registers but also both comprehension and production in each. Where a distinction is made, it tends to be in terms of the addition of a few extra points for comprehension in particular units of work.

This approach urgently needs to be questioned, because, as is increasingly being acknowledged[20], comprehension and production require language to be processed in different ways.

In comprehension, learners' eyes and ears may be hit by the fully formulated expressions, spoken or written, of other persons who often are at a higher level of proficiency, e.g. teachers or native speakers. Large and possibly highly complex units, such as paragraphs, that are far beyond the productive capacity of the pupil, must be broken down into smaller units of various sorts of meaning, e.g.:

- essential to the reader/listener's purpose
- relevant though not essential
- marginal
- irrelevant

In production on the other hand, learners attempt to turn small elements, e.g. words or global phrases, into larger units, e.g. paragraphs and then text.

There is evidence[21] that in their initial attempts to implement a communicative approach, many teachers devoted large amounts of time to enabling their pupils to speak the language. During the first year of secondary education they built up a gap between comprehension and production, but by the end of the second year this gap had narrowed because they were not to the same extent further extending their pupils capacities in comprehension. In consequence, the range of sentence structure learnt for 'comprehension plus production' tended to become synonymous with the range for 'production' alone.

The *Assessment of Performance* Unit[22] likewise warns against putting too many eggs in the production (speaking, writing) basket:

> *There should be a balanced allocation of time which does not emphasise exploitation activities at the expense of time spent listening and reading.*

If a beginning on cognitive-academic language proficiency is to be made, then two developments in the treatment of structure would seem appropriate.

First, teaching a wide range of sentence structure for comprehension, allowing pupils as quickly as possible to 'get into' texts that have a depth of content which corresponds to their real level of cognitive maturity. This cannot happen if comprehension grammar is coupled with production grammar. Instead, it is not unreasonable to expect all or most learners to have encountered and explicitly reflected on, though not fully internalised, most of the main patterns of sentence structure of the language by the end of (say) their second year.

Second, it may be useful to devise different sorts of exercise, depending on the direction of processing, i.e.

* complex to simple for comprehension
* simple to complex for production.

In the case of comprehension: drawing attention to different sorts of function word embedded within the fully formulated texts of native speakers, e.g. analysing the text into component elements such as

* heavy semantic markers
* connectors
* aspects of morphology that convey meaning
* aspects of morphology that do not convey meaning
* emphasis, redundancy, understatement ... etc

In the case of production, this might involve synthesising words into different possible sentences, and sentences into different possible paragraphs, e.g. creating as many different sentences as possible out of

HIER ACCIDENT RUE TROIS MORTS

Attending to the structure of discourse

In the film *Poulet au vinaigre* a police inspector interrogates two suspects about a murder that had been committed.

With one of the suspects he follows the predictable interrogation track by posing a series of short, snappy questions.

With the other the interrogation takes a more apparently relaxed but in fact more devious course as follows:

- *Je suis payé ... pas très cher ... pour farfouiller ... épier ... emmerder les gens ... et pour trouver un petit peu de vérité ... Vous comprenez ça? ... Vous comprenez ça? ... Alors, vous allez me dire ce que vous avez fait dans la soirée du 10 octobre ... la veille du jour où Filiol s'est tué ...*
- *J'ai regardé la télé avec ma mère, comme tous les soirs ...*
- *Tous les soirs ... tous les soirs ... pas hier soir ... C'était quoi le programme?*
- *Un western ... Rio Bravo ...*
- *Ah je l'ai vu ... John Wayne ... Je vérifierai dans le journal ...*

i.e. he uses only one interrogatory question. In other words, in interrogating the two suspects he has used two entirely different strategies in order to fulfill essentially the same speech act: interrogation about a past event.

In consequence, in both spoken and written language it will be important for learners wishing to make progress in cognitive-academic language proficiency to attend not only to

- different ways of realising a communicative function at the phrase level (e.g. 'offering' being realised by *Du pain*? and *Tu veux du pain*? ... etc)

but also to

- different ways of realising the same speech act (e.g. interrogation, persuasion, interview, reporting ...) at the level of sustained discourse.

This implies sensitivity to the manner in which particular large-scale effects are achieved through the use of language, and it takes us some way beyond the pleasing, quicksilver interchanges that often characterise BICS. To achieve these architectonic effects, a blend of linguistic competence and cognitive planning are necessary.

Perhaps it is worth remembering that some, though not all, youngish foreign-language learners will be well used to handling large stretches of spoken, written and other discourse in other aspects of their life. As I write these lines, for example, I have been watching on television a 14-year-old schoolboy playing Elgar's cello concerto, a formidable accomplishment of musical discourse. The whole, the overall effect of the concerto, consists of much more than the sum of the parts, the particular melodic lines. For learners of this sort, Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills may not be enough.

Writing mapped on to speech

Given that for many years foreign-language teaching in schools was unduly concerned with written language and that only in recent years has spoken language at last begun to attain the prominence it richly deserves, it may appear contradictory to argue that for the development of cognitive-academic language proficiency a command of written language should be tantamount to a precondition of certain kinds of high-level thought as expressed in speech.

It is commonly held that language is primarily speech, not writing. No doubt this is true chronologically, i.e. we listen and speak before we read and write, and also in terms of quantity of use, i.e. we often listen and speak more than we read and write.

However, this belief disguises one important fact, that spoken language represents one thing to someone who is not literate and something else to someone who is. An illiterate and a literate person could produce exactly the same spoken utterance, but they would represent that utterance to themselves differently. In the one case, the units of organisation called 'words' and 'sentences' do not exist, whereas in the other case they do. That is why it is nonsensical to argue that people do not speak in words, on the grounds that words are a convention of written rather than spoken language. People who are literate can represent to themselves their flow of spoken language in words, if they so choose, and this is an asset.

Children who are in the process of becoming literate take time before they are able to break the sound system of their spoken language down into words so as to represent their thoughts in writing. Primary school teachers often encounter forms in writing such as:

the smorning instead of: *this morning*

indicating that the particular pupil is not yet fully sensitive to word boundaries.

Those pupils who are able to map a written language system on to their spoken language are almost certainly at a great advantage. Two possible reasons for this suggest themselves.

First, at the level of sentence structure the capacity to represent to oneself one's unwritten thoughts in written form allows foreign-language learners if they so choose to function at the level of the word rather than the global phrase, i.e. at a smaller, more detailed level of morphological and syntactical organisation, and accordingly it is likely that this gives them a greater degree of refined control over what they will wish to express, provided that they have internalised the rules of synthesis that allow words to be combined to form larger units such as clauses, sentences and paragraphs. I say 'probably' and with some hesitation because I am not aware of this assumption having been tested in foreign-language learning in schools. In my own experience, however, those pupils in schools who have gained a good command of written language, and who have also had due attention paid to their spoken language, talk in ways that are different from those who, however fluent, have made less progress in writing - e.g. rather fewer ready-made cliché-type phrases. This would be a highly appropriate area for research investigation.

Second, at the level of discourse structure literacy enables pupils to stand outside their spoken language and contemplate it more objectively. By so doing, they are in a position to impose on it an overall shape that corresponds to their purposes, just as a sculptor imposes form on a block of stone. Becoming literate then allows learners to further develop their cognitive structuring and restructuring abilities. This is tantamount to arguing that literacy is a prerequisite of higher forms of thought.

As one authority [23]puts it:

> *... the central thesis of this volume is that the explanation of later phases of cognitive development and, in particular, higher mental functions must make reference to the distinctive features of written language for their explanation. If oral language forms the initial ground for the formation of mind and self, written language brings that initial development to a further phase of development.*

This is not to argue that literacy guarantees higher cognitive functioning or that higher cognitive functioning is impossible without literacy. Nonetheless, in western civilisation, for many learners literacy does have a key and possibly indispensable role to play in the development of mind.

As another authority[24] puts it:

> *... In other words, the child has to learn ... to 'disembed' his thinking from the supportive context of actual experience and to bring it under the control of meanings that are encoded in the linguistic message alone ... Such a change in orientation to linguistic meaning, and hence to cognitive functioning, is precisely what (...) claims to result from the acquisition of literacy ...*

What implication does this have for the development of cognitive-academic language proficiency in the classroom?

On this argument, writing is not simply a more difficult alternative to speech as a medium of expression. Writing helps learners to impose discipline and structure on their thought which can then be expressed in either speech or in writing at the level of coherent discourse.

The imposition of structure on thought by means of writing may be achieved in several ways, e.g. by taking and then reorganising notes, or by shaping text through successive drafts on a wordprocessor.

If writing is a pre-requisite of cognitive planning ability, it is also important as a means of releasing, disciplining and enhancing the creative imagination. Some quiet, untalkative pupils possess an intense and vivid inner life to which they enjoy giving imaginative private expression in writing, to an extent that surpasses what their particular cast of personality or cognitive style would comfortably allow them to attain publicly in spoken language.

In a previous chapter the importance of 'speaking for comprehension' was argued, i.e. interacting in the pursuit of other people's meanings (unmodified input with interaction) as opposed to passively accepting or rejecting them (premodified input with no interaction). This kind of speaking was considered at least as important as 'speaking to transmit information to another person'. The same applies to writing, except that the interaction can be with oneself. Writing can be one of our most private activities, a mirror on the self. Furthermore, if it enables pupils to look inwards to the self, it also directs their thoughts outwards to experiment with the nature, function and structure of decontextualised language.

> ... *But it is in the process of composition - in 'wrestling with words and meanings' - ... that one ultimately becomes fully aware of the power - and limitations - of the written language ... In my view therefore the common practice of waiting until children are already fluent readers before encouraging them to compose written texts is to miss one of the most effective means of introducing them to the possibilities that this new medium of communication makes available.*[25]

It is important, however, to add two cautionary notes to the argument.

First, we are concerned here with CALP where writing is of central importance, and not with BICS where writing may be desirable but cannot command the same central position and where opinion is legitimately divided on whether or not writing is an assessable skill for all learners at Standard Grade and GCSE.

Second, it is important to bear in mind a view expressed by Gillian Brown[26], a leading researcher in the field of (L1) spoken language who makes an interesting, though in my experience overstated, point:

> ... *spoken language heavily influenced by written language is typically produced by adult speakers who have spent a lot of time being influenced by written language. This language is not characteristic of young children and adolescents. It is true that we occasionally encounter highly academic adolescents who spend a lot of time reading and writing and do produce surprisingly mature language, but it must be clear that they are the exceptions.*

Nonetheless, for learners aiming to make a start in developing cognitive-academic language proficiency, writing through its disciplining, restructuring and experimenting functions assumes an importance far beyond its informational function of transmitting messages to another person.

BICS AND/OR CALP?

Thus far, there has been a possible implication that BICS is inferior to or less important than CALP.

This is not necessarily so. A really competent communicator in any language will be able to command both. Although CALP does require a higher degree of cognitive structuring, this does not necessarily make it superior or more important.

In the modern, media-saturated world both are important, as is perfectly evidenced in the following newspaper comment[27] about one of the candidates for a presidential election:

> *He cannot master either of the styles of speech-making usual in American politics: the lucid expression of an idea or series of ideas, and the snappy one-liner, designed to fit into a television clip.*

In the modern world, those with CALP-only are not necessarily better off than those with BICS-only. It is true that some individuals communicate successfully with other people by means of BICS and make no use of CALP. Conversely, it is true that other individuals, e.g. bookish academics, are much more at home with CALP than with BICS - and in consequence at times have difficulty in sustaining interest among students in their seminars and tutorials. Neither state is desirable.

In the past, generations of foreign-language learners at school were taught a foreign language with the aim of ultimately developing CALP but with little attention paid to BICS. Many fell by the wayside, but of those who did not and who eventually began to come to terms with CALP, their education would have been far more complete had they also had more opportunity to develop BICS. The use of BICS enables us to encounter highly important types of cultural, interpersonal meaning through interaction in social contexts that would elude us if CALP were the only resource on which we could draw.

There may even be a sense in which BICS is the more fundamental:

> *But speech has probably nothing to do with books. Speech is the primary reality, loose, inexact, clammed with solecisms, its grammar atrocious, but it is what human communication is about.*

This view is of course eminently challengeable, but as with many of the thoughts of Anthony Burgess[28] it also expresses a penetrating insight.

Research on bilingualism[29] suggests that BICS and CALP are not necessarily connected. This may be so, but a lack of connection of this sort should certainly not be the aim of foreign-language teaching.

It makes sense for teachers promoting BICS to reach towards CALP by raising the cognitive level and extending the discourse, and indications have already been provided on how this might be achieved.

Equally it is essential that CALP should draw on BICS. Indeed, in the present chapter CALP has been exemplified not only in terms of bookish activities such as essay-writing, article-writing or the study of literary texts, but also in terms of interactive activities such as discussing, debating, persuading, job interviewing, team reporting, negotiating ...

These higher interpersonal communication skills are the meeting-point of BICS and CALP. They require not only the cognitive-academic restructuring capabilities implied in CALP but also many of the interpersonal qualities such as sensitivity to interlocutor and confidence to engage in risk-taking implied in

BICS. Someone attempting 'persuasion' would be unlikely to achieve success if they were good on cognitive restructuring but poor at interpersonal interaction, and vice-versa. A good 'persuader' would be able to shift to and fro along the dimension from formal to informal, from planned to spontaneous, from monologue to dialogue as the occasion demanded.

A justifiable teaching approach therefore would cater for three strands:

BICS	BICS + CALP	CALP
Interpersonal	Interpersonal + Cognitive	Cognitive
Tourist transactions	Discussing	Essay-writing
	Debating	Literary texts etc
Simple personal exchanges etc	Negotiating etc	

with the middle strand providing the link between the other two.

If we look at foreign-language proficiency in this way, a number of questions inevitably arise, e.g.

- Should all pupils be asked to function in all three strands?
- If so - when and for how long?

These questions cannot be answered without reference to learners' own motivational orientations which form the basis of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LEARNERS: MOTIVATION

Classroom variables

At a practical level in the foreign language classroom there are all sorts of variable that have an instant impact on motivation, for good or for ill, as any learner, teacher or course-writer knows. A class may respond well or otherwise to a particular teacher, or to a particular method, partner, activity, course-book, lay-out of text, voice on cassette, and so on.

This section however does not attempt to deal with everyday classroom motivation, important though it is. Instead, it outlines three more fundamental types of motivation which are directed to learning a foreign language and to participating in the culture(s) in which the foreign language is spoken.

Attitude and motivation

First, however, it may be useful to distinguish between attitude and motivation.[1]

Attitudes have objects as their points of reference, e.g. a positive attitude to school, a negative attitude to mathematics. This does not imply that attitudes are either positive or negative. It is better to think of them as being located at points on a continuum ranging from highly positive through neutral to highly negative. Attitudes are deep-rooted. They probably take a long time to form, but once formed they take a long time to change. The attitude of native-speakers of English, in society at large within the UK, to foreign-language learning is gradually becoming more positive, but progress is at times painfully slow.

Motivation has goals rather than objects as its point of reference. Hence, learners may be highly motivated to learn French, or not at all motivated to go to Germany. Clearly, there must be a relationship of some sort between attitudes and motivations, but it is not evident exactly what this is. It is possible for example to have a negative attitude to Germans but to be highly motivated to learn German.

The three fundamental types of motivational orientation are:

- academic
- instrumental
- integrative (or existential)[2]

It is likely that all foreign-language learners possess the seeds of all three types within themselves, but equally likely that as they progress the balance of the three types varies from individual to individual.

Academic motivation

This is directed towards learning a foreign language as an exemplar of language in general. It entails a detached, analytical focus on language as a symbolic system of rules covering many different intersecting areas, e.g. speech and writing, semantic fields, dialect and register, philology, language learning. It does not imply a direct intention to be able to communicate spontaneously in the foreign language but rather to understand what it is, how it works and what it is used for. Powering this motivation may be a desire to gain insight into general processes of human language, cognition, communication, culture, civilisation or history.

By no means every learner in school is strongly conscious of experiencing this kind of motivation, but some undoubtedly are. In the foreign-language class they will be interested in matters such as:

- place-names
- L1-foreign language puns
- similarities and differences between the learner's native culture and the cultures that embody the foreign languages being learnt
- the historical development of certain words, possibly from Latin or Greek
- word-clusters, e.g. all of the verbs in German that cluster round *-fahren*
- structural similarities and differences between their L1 and the foreign language that they are studying
- the differences between stress-timed and syllable-timed languages, and between phonetic and ideographic script.

Perhaps they will end up teaching linguistics, sociology or psychology, writing dictionaries or grammar-books, or setting crossword puzzles.

All of this contributes valuably to a general awareness of language. In some learners this academic motivation may remain much as it is, but in others as they progress it may become extended to cover related areas such as learning and communication, i.e. they may find it interesting to reflect in a detached, analytical manner on the strategies that human beings (possibly other than themselves) employ in order to learn or to communicate.

It should be said in passing that this sort of motivation would benefit greatly from an explicit and clearly understood whole-school policy designed to help teachers as well as learners develop a functional awareness of language, of learning and of communication across all subjects. Foreign-language teachers have a right to expect support from other subjects in cultivating this particular ground.

Academic motivation is geared to the pursuit of knowledge. Foreign-language learners who experience this type of motivation will justify an awareness of language, of culture, of learning and of communication as intellectually valid pursuits in their own right. At the same time, however, this kind of motivation can have practical benefits.

Research on problem-solving for example suggests two types of knowledge as being important[3]:

* declarative knowledge, e.g. knowledge of the components of a car
* procedural knowledge, e.g. knowledge of what to do in order to drive a car.

Declarative knowledge of a linguistic system may or may not be of much use to us for purposes of communication, but procedural knowledge of what to do in order to communicate may well be highly useful. Indeed, one of the main arguments of this book is that procedural knowledge of how to communicate, e.g. teachers using problem-creating strategies and learners using achievement strategies, has every chance of facilitating communication in classrooms.

Instrumental motivation

'Instrumental' learners won't want to learn a foreign language primarily out of interest but will have specific utilitarian purposes in mind. These will serve a concept of self of which they already think they are aware and which they accept, i.e. 'I am an able / average / less able Scots youngster of ... years of age ... and a foreign language will / will not be useful to me now / in the future for the following purposes ... '. For some, it will be useful as a means of gaining an examination pass, possibly helping with entry requirements for Higher or Further Education. For others, it may be useful for future vocational or leisure purposes. For others, it will be useful for basic purposes of tourism.

This strong sense of purpose serving an explicitly understood concept of self will act as a filter on input and output. Prior attention will be paid to those aspects of the foreign language that are identified as being relevant to this sense of purpose - the aim will be to develop a language for special purposes.

In comprehension, those aspects of language that are perceived as being not relevant to the explicit purposes may be filtered out. The self-blinkered learner may simply not perceive them, reminding us of the reduction strategy 'distortion by prior selective focus'. Production will be geared to the attainment of specified macro-or micro objectives rather than to the development of a more general all-round proficiency. The logic of this approach is modularisation - reducing the infinitely complex potential of the foreign language down to manageable segments, each with clearly specified entry and exit behaviours.

It is not suggested that modularisation is necessarily a bad thing - only that there may be a price to pay if the approach is over-instrumental. That price is a reduction in opportunity for learners themselves to make their own connections and to define their own outcomes in ways that module-creators had not perceived.

This same point is well made in a discussion among students in the film *La Dentellière*. One of them holds up a matchbox in various poses, using it as a metaphor for the modularised compartmentalisation of our lives:

- *Ça c'est ta voiture ... ça c'est ta maison ... ton bureau ... ton lit ... le métro ... l'avion ... l'ascenseur ... le cerceuil ... t'es toujours dans la boîte ... regarde ...*

on n'a pas l'air gai, hein? ... il y a tout dedans ... le bureau ... la bouffe ... la baise ...
- *Et alors, tu veux prouver quoi?*
- *Mais enfin tu n'as pas compris? ... c'est pourtant évident ... il y a eu l'âge d'or ... l'âge de fer ... maintenant l'âge de la boîte est venu ... l'âge de la boîte est la standardisation ...( ) ... la boîte est la solution à tous les problèmes.*

In favour of instrumental motivation it is right to remember that for many years what was lacking in foreign-language teaching was precisely a sense of focus, of purpose and of practicality. Developments in the past ten years emphasising a functional approach were sorely needed as a counterbalance to the heavily academic emphasis that the subject had.

It would be relatively easy to specify a syllabus for 'instrumental' learners, because this would be governed by the explicit uses which they had in mind. These uses could be of many different sorts, not all of them communicative, e.g.

* *If you want to pass your Higher German, you will have to learn the following ...*
* *If you want to become a bi-lingual secretary, you will need to learn to ...*
* *If you are touring in France, you will need to be able to read the following kinds of sign, to perform the following kinds of function in speech and to understand French people talking on the following topics ...*

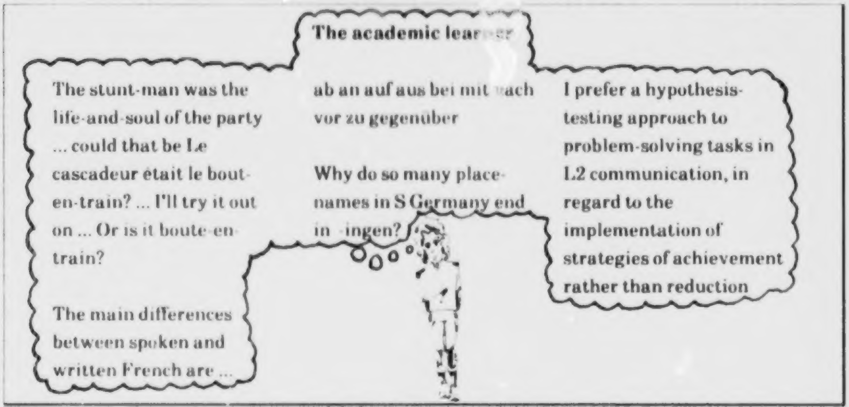
Learners with an instrumental motivation will have little difficulty in accepting these requirements.

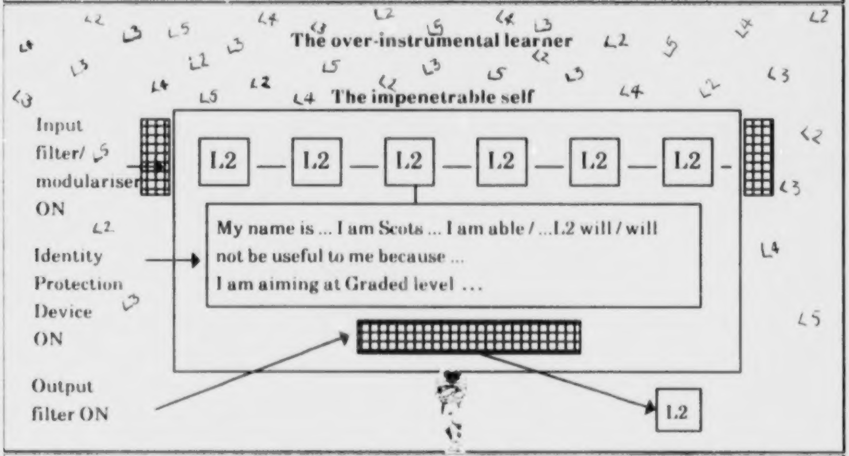
Instrumental motivation is already receiving a welcome and long overdue boost in the run-up to 1992.

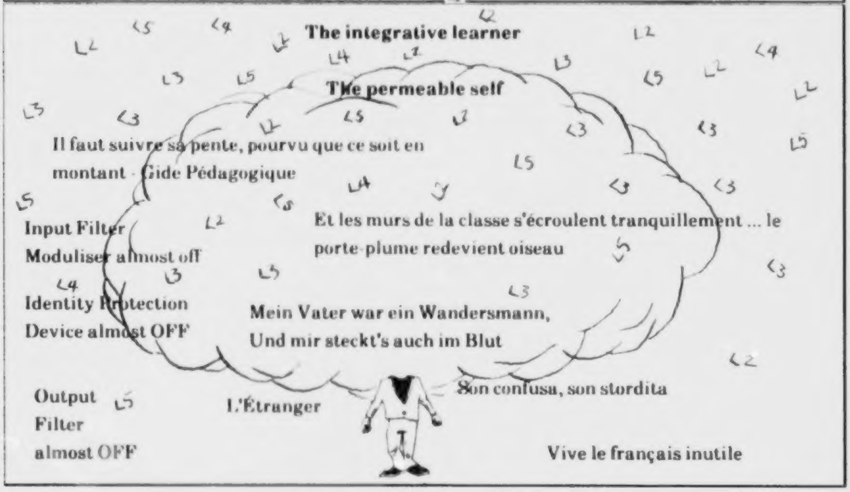
Integrative (or existential) motivation
The multi-cultural, multi-lingual self

This indicates a wish to identify closely with the target culture and language. Rather than analyse them from the outside in a detached 'academic' manner, the 'integrative' learner will wish to become immersed in them. Something deep inside will be whispering: *Although born in Scotland, I like Spanish so much that I wish to become partly Spanish myself.*

Whenever possible, foreign-language learners experiencing integrative motivation will actively seek contacts with native-speakers, even to the point of marrying them, will go to foreign-language films and plays, read foreign-language books and magazines, and visit the foreign country. Favoured classroom activities will not force them to retain their existing Scots (or other) identity, i.e. they will not be of the *You are a Scots youngster who wants to ...* variety with lengthy task or test scenarios ponderously scaffolded in L1. On the contrary, 'integrative' pupils will respond more to dramatic activities in which foreign language is required throughout and in which they have an opportunity to lose themselves. Their ego-boundaries being permeable, they will wish to act existentially, giving expression to potential selves latent within their personality that turn them towards the foreign culture. They may role-play as foreign persons, or they may remain as their real self - but as their French or German or Spanish or Italian or Russian or international self.


The academic learner
The stunt-man was the life-and-soul of the party ... could that be Le cascadeur était le bout-en-train? ... I'll try it out on ... Or is it boute-en-train?
The main differences between spoken and written French are ...
ab an auf aus bei mit nach vor zu gegenüber
Why do so many place-names in S Germany end in -ingen?
I prefer a hypothesis-testing approach to problem-solving tasks in L2 communication, in regard to the implementation of strategies of achievement rather than reduction


The over-instrumental learner
The impenetrable self
Input filter/ modulariser ON
L2 — L2 — L2 — L2 — L2 — L2 -
Identity Protection Device ON
My name is ... I am Scots ... I am able / ...L2 will / will not be useful to me because ...
I am aiming at Graded level ...
Output filter ON
L2


The integrative learner
The permeable self
Il faut suivre sa pente, pourvu que ce soit en montant - Gide Pédagogique
Input Filter Moduliser almost off
Et les murs de la classe s'écroulent tranquillement ... le porte-plume redevient oiseau
Identity Protection Device almost OFF
Mein Vater war ein Wandersmann, Und mir steckt's auch im Blut
Output Filter almost OFF
L'Étranger
Son confusa, son stordita
Vive le français inutile

For some, this kind of motivation entails real contact with native speakers and the target culture, but for others who may be less inclined to social interaction it assumes a more vicarious form. They identify less with real people and events than with the products of the target culture's imaginative life.

When watching a foreign-language programme on television, for example, it is sometimes almost an act of 'being' rather than of mere detached 'observation'. So, the mature existential learner switches effortlessly from being Johnny Halliday, smoking a fag at the pool-table whilst muttering verbal asides designed to put down Nathalie Baye, to being Giorgio Zancanaro bringing the *Arena di Verona* to its feet with a stupendous rendition of *Il balen*. Are these simply the vicarious musings of a culturally elitist has-been - pace Dennis Potter, a kind of 'Singing Pedagogue'? *Es war immer so*. At school, there were the pulsating effects of *Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind*? and the apparent artlessness of *Am Brunnen vor dem Tore*.

'Existential' learners will be sensitive to the magical effects of foreign language words and sounds which will enable them to move around in their imagination among their potential selves.

Before she started going to primary school our young family friend, Carol, could identify a wide range of arias, duets, trios and so on sung in Italian from over a dozen different operas. She would happily watch *La Traviata* or *Il Barbiere* alone on the small screen, and at the mention of *Le Nozze di Figaro* she could not only deliver a pleasing rendition of *Non piu andrai, farfallone amoroso* but would also play verbal games involving puns and associations based on it and many others of that ilk. Although she does not speak a word of Italian, she is sensitive to the magical combination of sounds, forms and general meanings. One thing is very clear - sensitivity to sound and to linguistic form go very closely together. If for example one sings *La ci darem lo mano* the mistake will be immediately corrected, and this will be done without any explicit knowledge of rules. Significantly, and perhaps reassuringly, as the years go by much of this has now apparently gone, overtaken by the cult of 'Madonna' and others of that genre. Nonetheless, it is still there somewhere and in time will assuredly reappear.

To explain this process away in terms of middle-class cultural literacy would be absurd. Sensitivity to sound, meaning and precise linguistic form is a universal phenomenon, as manifest in socially disadvantaged working-class communities as it is anywhere else, as anyone who reads *The Patter* or who watches *Tutti Frutti* must confirm.

In most foreign-language classes that I have seen, however, especially those in which there is a clear orientation towards academic or instrumental aims, the rich associative source that creates this link between sound pattern and linguistic form and that feeds the existential self is cut off because thirty personal computers are keyed into a totally different identity mode.

I have mentioned integrative and existential motivation as though they were the same. There is possibly a difference in that the 'integrative' learner wishes to merge into a particular culture, whereas the 'existentialist' learner wishes to explore new aspects of the multi-cultural self. Whichever form is favoured, it has got very little to do with elitism. I well remember several third-year secondary non-certificate classes being possessed by *Rappelle-toi, Barbara*, and the rugby brigade in a bottom fifth-year class confessing that exhaustive study on record plus text of two chapters from Madame Bovary - *Les noces normandes* and *Les comices agricoles* - were among the most important events in their lives up to that point.

However, it is possible to make somewhat exaggerated claims in regard to existentialist or integrative motivation.

In one case, for example, the author[4] claims that children:

> *... see the foreign language as a key to new horizons, worlds and dimensions of experience and not as a practical tool to be used in life.*

Valuable though it is that children should broaden their experience, there is not convincing evidence available to justify such an easy dismissal of a foreign language as a practical tool for children as well as for others.

Another integrative view[5] makes a strong claim in favour of 'acculturation':

> *Second language acquisition is just one aspect of acculturation and the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language.*

There is an excellent point here, which is that the 'psychological distance' perceived by the learner between himself or herself and the foreign culture will be likely to influence the extent to which the learner develops proficiency in the foreign language. Certainly, over the years many pupils, teachers and parents in the UK have been only too aware of a substantial 'psychological distance' between their own culture and cultures in which (say) French or German are spoken. This, rather than any lack of ability, may lie at the heart of a widely acknowledged lack of competence in foreign languages among residents of the UK.

Where the claim is overstated, however, is in the extent to which it claims that acculturation 'controls' acquisition. Other researchers[6] contest this view.

In consequence, it would be unwise to go overboard for integrative or existential motivation at the expense of the other forms, since all three are equally valid, but at the same time I do believe that much could be gained from experimenting with classroom techniques that were designed to encourage learners to switch off for a while the reality-modularising template that life has imposed upon them, that tells them 'I am Scots ... I am able / average / less able ... I am aiming for ... I need / don't need a foreign language because ... I have learnt/not learnt to ...', and instead to allow language to flow more freely into and out of its rich associative subconscious sources.

None of this necessarily implies a negative wish to surrender all aspects of self or of nationality but it does indicate a desire to enrichen one's personality and to extend one's sense of community. After all, most learners at school are still at a formative period in their lives. They do not necessarily know exactly what sort of self they wish to become, so why in our foreign-language curriculum should we assume that they do? For all learners a foreign language ought to be an interesting means of further self-discovery.

It is not suggested that for the integrative or existentialist learner life is one long pleasurable experience. On the contrary, in many cases, like actors, they undoubtedly go through something akin to an identity crisis, experiencing disturbed feelings of disorientation, what has been called 'anomie' a problem often associated with multilingual communities.

Motivation and foreign-language proficiency

Probably all researchers agree that there is a relation between motivation and foreign language proficiency, but there is less agreement on what that relation is. Some[7] claim that motivation leads to proficiency, in that if a class is motivated to learn a foreign language, then a higher level of proficiency will be attained than in a comparable class that however was not so motivated. Others [8] claim that proficiency leads to motivation, in that to begin with most young learners do not have a clear idea of why they are in a foreign-language class, but if they begin to feel that they are genuinely making progress in the foreign language then motivation will ensue. After a while, however, the two must surely feed on each other.

From personal experience of examining sixth-formers in oral French, let me describe three groups of learner whom I encountered recently in schools.

In the one case it seemed very clear to me that their motivation was a mixture of all three types, with a possible emphasis on the instrumental. They were four very pleasant, clever young persons who spoke in good, fairly fluent, and generally correct French. It was a pleasure to talk with them, though none of them intended pursuing their studies in foreign languages beyond school. They were intending to take up business studies, banking and law, and there was never at any time a second's doubt that they were Scots.

In the case of another candidate, her motivation was clearly integrative. She had developed social contacts with the French *assistante* and other native speakers. During the summer vacation of the previous year she had obtained a waitressing job abroad and had made the acquaintance of a young waiter from French-speaking Switzerland ...! I doubt if she was as intellectually able as the best two candidates in the first school (since she had not obtained the requisite general entry qualifications for university), but she spoke fast, fluent, colloquial French with a superb accent, and with ease covered a wide range of topics. Her language clearly came from some source deep within her. While generally correct, it was not overtly disciplined by cerebral monitoring - it was very like L1 production in fact. At the end of the test she escorted me back to the headteacher's office - a walk of some ten minutes, as we struggled against the wave of on-coming school-dinner-seekers. When we got there, we both suddenly realised that we were still talking French. This is by no means the only example of this sort of 'integrative' learner whom I have encountered - making outstanding progress on BICS, less so on CALP.

In another school, one candidate was extremely shy, and (as his teacher mentioned to me before the test began) he clearly did not enjoy conversing in any language. During the test he spoke slowly, almost painfully, but with almost total correctness and in something amounting to paragraphs, rather than in quicksilver, interactive global phrases. He was clever enough to monitor his output as he was delivering it - a unique achievement. His motivation was clearly 'academic' - and he was making excellent progress on CALP, less so on BICS.

From examples such as those above, it appears to be the case that different types of motivation may to some extent lead to different types of foreign-language proficiency.

It makes good sense then that a communicative strategy should cater for all three types of motivation, allowing learners gradually to discover their own particular preference or preferences.

If I may express a prejudice, however, I believe that at present the instrumental philosophy may have gained too much prominence in schools (and probably not enough prominence in universities). If instrumental motivation in schools, in the form for example of a never-ending diet of tourist transactions, is over-emphasised at the expense of other forms, foreign languages may be rejected not only by those of an instrumental orientation who happen to have no use for them, but also by those who seek to discover in them other sorts of motivation that are not adequately catered for.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHAT'S INVOLVED IN ...?

Research on story-telling[1] indicates that if certain principles of story-telling are applied, then the story will be easier to understand than it will be if these principles are not applied.

This chapter is not about story-telling but it does offer some preliminary and speculative thoughts on a number of important types of speech act such as reporting, persuading, interviewing, and including:

- real-life examples of the particular speech act
- its general features
- the sorts of unpredictability that must be catered for
- the sorts of language function likely to be required.

Most learners have already internalised some if not all of the discourse rules that underlie these speech acts in their own L1, but in many cases they may have not engaged in the consciousness-raising process described in Chapter 6. Having no conscious control over these major speech acts, they cannot deliberately put them to communicative use in classrooms, whether in L1 or the foreign language. This is a pity because it means that their experience is not being made use of. Once they are aware of this potential connection between their L1 experience of life and possibilities for classroom activity in a foreign language, they may well be able to draw on their experience in order to do (say):

- a 'News at 10' approach to reporting
- a 'Sir Robin' approach to chairing a discussion and debate
- a 'Cilla Black' approach to blind-dating, and possibly
- a 'Wogan' approach to a certain kind of show-biz interview.

In programmes such as these, we may be entirely sure that the principles on which they are based are not left to chance. They must surely receive the most careful consideration.

The ideas in this section are not intended as prescriptions but rather as unresearched speculation designed to stimulate discussion concerning the conventional patterns of discourse that characterise a sample of those speech acts in which people commonly engage.

EVERYDAY TOURIST TRANSACTIONS

Real-life examples

* Buying and selling
* Having a meal out
* Checking into a hotel
* Getting tickets at the cinema
* Obtaining petrol at filling-station

Common real-life features

* Context-embedded talk, i.e. language does only part of the work.
* Intentions, roles and financial parameters must normally be clear.
* Visual and auditory backcloth, e.g. drawings, notices, adverts, sound effects.
* Real objects and props, physical movement.
* Other people perform transactions at the same time, and you may move from one transaction to another.
* Deixis (*Ça - Die da, bitte*).
* Routinised behaviour of most shopkeepers, waiters, ticket-sellers.
* Grammar may at times be unimportant, because most exchanges are brief, and much meaning can be conveyed by gesture.
* Most important activity may be discriminatory reading - menus, timetables, shop-signs, prices.
* Often, less demand on listening and speaking though the brief exchanges must be efficient in fulfilling the explicit intention.

Unpredictability

Limited - most transactions are routine though wallets do get lost, people do jump the queue etc, and some preparation for this will be necessary.

Possible language functions

* Asking for
* Paying
* Quality
* Price
* Thanking
* Selecting
* Refusing
* Excuses
* Quantity
* Complaining
* Type of goods

- Inquiring
- Offering
- Handing over
- Attracting attention

SOCIALISING

Real-life examples

- Getting to know other learners
- Meeting a penfriend and family
- General chat before, during and after transactions
- Meeting people at a party or café

Common real-life features

- You may give basic information about yourself but not necessarily feel inclined to put all cards on table, and interlocutors likewise.
- Simple socialisation among unknowns at a party for example could be expressed by comments on the food and drink rather than on detailed personal chat.
- Working out attitudes to each other.
- Speculation about underlying intentions. Is this the chat-up?
- Importance of language register - talking formally or informally to known or unknown young persons or adults of lower or higher or similar social background.
- Importance of awareness of social convention. If you are a guest, it may not be appropriate to take too many initiatives but better to leave these to hosts.

Unpredictability

More likely if socialising with unknown persons. Social difficulties may arise through wrongly interpreting cultural conventions and uses of language in the other country. For example, will *Si on allait au cinéma*? be understood as a suggestion? What will learners think of kissing on both cheeks or of constantly shaking hands? What will they think of 'continentals' who appear to eat half-cooked meat covered in garlic and spend most of the meal-time smoking foul-smelling cigarettes? Will the use of *Merci* be interpreted correctly? What to think when without warning the penfriend at whose house you are staying suddenly goes off for three days to another town to meet friends and doesn't tell you about it, leaving you to your own devices? When staying with penfriends, how to explain such events or predicaments as feeling sick, been sick, broken something, requiring certain things at the chemist's but not knowing how to order them, wanting to get away and be on your own for a while but not wanting to give offence? What do you do if your penfriend's brother or sister for the entire first week totally ignores your presence, or if the parents appear to be uninterested in you and not to be taking you for all of those excursions that your parents took your penfriend on when he/she stayed with you? All of the above are real-life examples that happened to 14-15-year-old Scots pupils during school-exchange visits in which they participated.

Tu n'aimes pas le steak, Morag?
Si monsieur, mais j'ai déjà très bien mangé
It's still alive!

Possible functions or notions

- Introducing
- Opinions
- Flattering
- Impressing
- Role hierarchy
- Group dynamics
- Taking leave
- Finding out about
- Establishing common ground
- Excuses

PRACTICAL TASKS

Real-life examples

- Model-making
- Science experiment
- Cooking a meal
- Drawing
- Painting
- Jig-saw
- Handling pets

- Gardening
- Moving objects
- Making a film
- Woodwork
- Sewing
- Playing a game
- Learning a dance
- Producing a play
- Treasure hunt
- Visit to zoo

Common real-life features

- Someone possesses a particular skill
- They attempt to pass this on to others
- The skill is demonstrated, explained, attempted
- Help and constructive criticism are given
- Performance is evaluated, comparisons drawn
- Often, context-embedded language
- Periods of silent physical activity
- Very specific, specialised vocabulary
- Deixis - *Mettez-ça ici, non, là*!
- Demonstrator likely to do most of the explaining, cajoling, criticising
- Learners more likely to ask questions, make asides, indicate problems
- Jokes, pleasant frustration and general good humour

Unpredictability

Something might go wrong - e.g. the pot might boil over, or someone might have a special problem, e.g. is colour-blind or can't use right-handed scissors.

Possible functions and notions

- Explaining how to
- Cataloguing equipment
- Giving simple commands
- Encouraging
- Restraining
- Identifying
- Asking questions
- Allocating roles
- Specifying conditions
- Defining criteria
- Comparing and evaluating
- Expressing feelings
- Expressing problems

It may at times be counter-productive to have all of these activities in a conventional foreign-language classroom. A foreign-language activities room would be useful, one with no desks but with benches, a sink, paints, scissors, large sheets of paper and a wide variety of props. It could double up as a foreign language drama workshop. It does not make sense to think of every foreign-language classroom as serving exclusively academic purposes.

Learner 'hands-on' own skills

In any class there will be some learners who possess unusual skills, arising from personal interests. They might be encouraged to participate in 'hands-on' sessions, in which they explain and demonstrate their skill to the rest of the class, giving them the opportunity to practise it. It may be that the teacher or foreign assistant will have a mediating role to play in helping the demonstrator with language.

MAKING ARRANGEMENTS

Real-life examples

* Deciding what to do
* Planning arrival/departure
* Fixing meeting/interview
* Planning visit/party
* Settling conditions for deal
* Having something done, e.g. car repaired

Common real-life features

* A group of people have an explicit purpose in mind
* They may have different views on how that purpose should be fulfilled
* May have different constraints operating on them
* As a result of discussion a decision is made or the purpose is abandoned
* If a decision is made, either one particular view will have prevailed or a compromise will have been accepted
* Being an arrangement, the agreed decision will imply a certain commitment from each party to do what has been agreed
* Often, highly interactive language
* Language does much of the work of communication
* Possibly argumentative as differing views on how to fulfill the purpose are aired
* Need to make explicit the parameters for making a decision - i.e. what is and is not feasible for each participant
* Important to take account of what others say

Unpredictability

Unforeseen parameters, e.g. the other person can't arrive at desired time. Intransigent interlocutor, or unexpected opposition

Possible functions and notions

- Listing options
- Listing possibilities
- Specifying conditions
- Listing possible solutions
- Making decisions
- Coping with unforeseen
- Coping with intransigence
- Making suggestions
- Inviting
- Expressing opinion
- Evaluating desirability
- Evaluating feasibility
- Giving guarantees
- Making contingency plans
- Threatening sanctions if default occurs
- Compromising

In class

Related to practical tasks

In addition to simulating the activities given in the examples (above), it would be more realistic to make arrangements for real by relating this speech-act to the preceding one of Practical Tasks - i.e. require learners to use foreign language in order to make the arrangements for the Practical Tasks that they will subsequently carry out.

Learners plan lessons

Very feasibly in class, however, there could be arrangement-making in regard to decisions about how some future lessons are to be conducted - e.g.

- What will be done?
- Who will do it?
- What equipment will be required?
- How long will each activity last?

INTERVIEWING

Real-life examples

- A job interview
- An interview with a witness, e.g. of an accident
- A show-biz, chat-show interview

- An investigative interview, e.g. questioning a suspect
- A fact-finding interview, e.g. opinion-survey
- Diagnostic interview - doctor/patient, mechanic/car-owner

Common real-life features

- One person asks a series of questions about a topic of which the interlocutor appears to have knowledge
- The apparent aim is to elicit information for the benefit of the interviewer or for a wider audience
- This information may be for practical purposes or simply for interest or entertainment
- The interviewer may or may not know or know about the interviewee
- Some interviews may have hidden purposes, e.g. chat-show interviews may have purpose of flattering egos or plugging latest film/book
- Sometimes the interviewer has higher status, e.g. chairman of board, detective, while in others it is the interviewee, e.g. film-star
- In some interviews, there may be a number of interviewers, e.g. a panel making a job appointment, and in others the wider audience may be appealed to, e.g. chat-show audience participation

Unpredictability

Each type of interview may tend to have its own predictable routine, but the interviewees will not normally be able fully to predict interviewers' questions, and interviewers will not be able to predict all responses. Both sides must be able to think on their feet. From the interviewee's point of view, it will often be desirable to think hard in advance, so as to be able to predict the sorts of question that might be asked.

A job interview

The interviewer

will have available a CV for each applicant; will know exactly the requirements of the job; will know exactly the qualities required; will wish to match applicants to these; will wish to be satisfied about certain general qualities in the candidate.

The candidate

will have decided on applying for the job; will already have given some thought to it; should be able and prepared to talk positively of own qualities, though not to boast about them, and to minimise though not totally ignore less relevant or unsatisfactory qualities; should be prepared to expand on aspects of CV if required; should be able to identify trip-questions, designed to catch candidate off guard; should be able to express self in polite somewhat formal mode if necessary; should be able to explain why wants the job; should be able to ask questions about the job and conditions of service; should be able to convince interviewers of good command of foreign language.

Possible functions and notions

Job interview

- Self - past/present/future
- Good and bad qualities
- Telling/disguising truth
- Being polite/deferential
- Showing initiative
- Showing competitive spirit
- Guessing intentions
- Countering criticisms
- Giving explanations for behaviours, intentions

In class

An interview panel to interview applicants and decide on who will be the most suitable person in class to meet the Queen when she visits the town; to represent the class at meetings of school-council; to do the graphics-work for the class magazine ...

REPORTING

Real-life examples

- News at 10
- Telling about an exchange visit
- Sports reporting
- Survey findings
- Phone-in
- Passing on gossip
- Documentary reporting, e.g. on wildlife
- Informing about a practical task that has been carried out

Common features in real life

- A person or group presents information to another group who may or may not already possess some or all of this information
- The information may be presented by exposition alone or by exposition with inserted interviews, live or recorded

- It may cover one or more topics
- There may be an advance summary, to create a framework of anticipation
- The information may be divided into fairly short segments
- Segment boundaries will often be explicitly marked
- There may be a summary at the end
- The reporting team may consist of presenters, interviewers, reporters, script-writers, technicians
- The information may be gathered from one or more sources
- Reporting requires sustained discourse, so connections will be essential - *A toi maintenant, Jean-Pierre*
- If visual support is used, the language may have less work to do but information may possibly be better communicated, since both audience and speakers will have an occasional break from talk. On the other hand, many people prefer the news on radio to its televised counterpart.

Unpredictability

From the audience's point of view there will be unpredictability if the report covers a topic that they don't know about. If they do know about the topic, unpredictability will come in if the team deliberately gives new information or a new angle on old information - attempting perhaps to be provocative.

From the presenters' point of view, there will often be little unpredictability, because the report will have been carefully planned. Nonetheless, there could be unpredictability through having 'live' interviews with witnesses to an incident. There could also be news flashes, delivered by messenger or by computer, with which the presenters would suddenly have to cope. These would not be fully written out but would be likely to be in telegramese, so the presenters would have to interpret and expand upon them.

Possible functions and notions

- Introducing item
- Where it happened
- When it happened
- Who was involved
- Commercial breaks
- Summarising
- Implications
- On to next item
- Sequencing
- Linking event to any previous events that have occurred
- Giving range of 'live' in-the-field personal reactions
- Finishing with a joke or humorous episode

In class

The use of an overhead projector, blackboard, video, micro for presenting visual and statistical information in a realistic, imaginative, multi-media manner is strongly to be encouraged.

PERSUASION

Examples

This section deals only with a very narrow range of persuasion. For the moment it regrettably has to omit discussion of such time-honoured techniques as a special perfume or after-shave, a subliminal vamp, or a liminal one for that matter.

Examples of more mundane acts of persuasion might be:

- persuading an unwilling customer to buy something
- persuading a reluctant friend to accompany you in some exploit, outing, adventure
- persuading parents to allow you to do something despite their better judgement
- persuading a sceptical teacher to ...

Common features in real life

- The two participants have different roles. One is in favour of something and the other has reservations.
- The persuader tries to make the other person change their mind.
- The persuader decides on exactly what he/she wants to achieve
- The persuader takes full accout of the sort of person the addressee is.

Persuasion may be non-interactive, e.g. adverts on tele, poster, by letter.

If so, the persuader must

- make instant impact that the addressee will afterwards retain, though not necessarily consciously
- make very few key points, but make them well
- and may attempt to form subconscious association in mind of addressee with some pleasurable experience.

Persuasion may be attempted interactively, in which case the persuader is likely to be able to tune things much more to the particular individual target.

If so, the persuader:

- thinks of the best way of expressing the initial request to the addressee
- decides on which tone to adopt, e.g. hard or soft, aggressive or laid-back

- leaves certain cards up the sleeve, to be played later
- maximises the good points of the desired outcome, e.g. usefulness or attractiveness to addressee
- minimises any opposition, e.g. by downright criticism or by deft innuendo
- anticipates initial objections from addressee
- has already formulated answers to these objections
- has back-up, e.g. catalogues, consumers' comments.

Persuasion by means of interaction lays emphasis on:

- speed of reaction to what others say, showing that their objections have all been fully understood
- instant exemplification of points
- confidence with discourse-markers, especially in turn-taking, linking points and summarising
- readiness to adopt a variety of tone and language register
- ability to use conditionals and other modifiers - *Il serait peut-être utile de ... Ça vous ennuierait si ...? Ça te dirait de ...?*

Possible functions and notions

- Attracting attention
- Holding attention
- Summing a person up
- Empathising
- Listing advantages
- Offering inducements
- Anticipating objections
- Countering objections
- Flattering
- Alternative proposals
- Summarising
- Making an offer

In class

Adverts

Groups make up an advert for a particular product. A class panel decides which is most effective.

Persuading the teacher

The teacher is unwilling to ... Each group in the class has to devise a strategy for persuading the teacher to change his or her mind. Each group attempts to do so in turn. Class as a whole (or, the teacher) decides which approach has worked best. Probably best if the learners themselves decide what they would like to persuade the teacher to do. In this case, probably best if each group decides on a different objective, otherwise the final groups will have an unfair advantage.

Teacher persuades the class

In fairness, the opposite would also have to apply. The teacher could attempt to persuade the class to change some aspect of its behaviour or attitude.

DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

Real-life examples

- Question-time
- Any questions
- Did you see ...?

Common features in real life

- Two or more persons talk together in order to describe, to elucidate, to evaluate the effects and qualities of particular ideas, individuals and products
- One person explicitly or implicitly assumes a chairperson's role
- Where this is explicit, the chairperson is normally fairly neutral and has the task of ensuring fair play and full participation from the others
- Where the matter is one of debate rather than general discussion, the argument tends to narrow down to two competing propositions, each supported by one or more persons
- Debate and persuasion are closely linked, but one difference is that in a debate one is often trying to score points off, rather than genuinely persuade, one's opponents
- Often language is highly context-reduced, so it has to do almost all of the work

The chairperson may:

- introduce the topic for debate, or may take this from an audience that is also present
- introduce each debater, giving a brief general account of that person, often in humorous terms
- stop the main discussion in order to take comment or supplementary questions from the audience.

The debaters

- may have little time in which to present their arguments

- must not make too many points, lest they lose the thread of their argument and their audience
- must be able to give credible examples to illustrate their few key points
- must be prepared to be interrupted and to deal quickly and effectively with opponents when this happens
- will do well if they can introduce a touch of humour, especially when dealing with opponents and audience
- must be able to leave the judge and audience with a strong final impression.

When attempting such high-level tasks as discussion and debate, foreign language learners will naturally make many mistakes, however clever they may be. This is not an argument for adopting a problem-reducing approach and deferring the activity. Some if not all learners may respond to the intellectual challenge, especially if they have become used to employing achievement strategies.

Possible functions and notions

- Greeting audience
- Warming up audience
- Introducing speakers
- Introducing a theme
- Audience reaction
- Stating viewpoint
- Agreeing
- Disagreeing
- Making a general point
- Conceding a point
- Yielding the floor
- Making a counter-point
- Illustrating a point
- Empathising with audience
- Summing up
- Taking a vote
- Giving result of vote
- Thanking debaters
- Thanking audience
- Anticipating next debate

In class

Listening to debates on tape

Class listens to native speakers of the foreign language debating particular issues. They decide which case has prevailed, what the good and not so good arguments were.

Discuss authentic texts

Class reads supportive authentic texts on particular issue and then discusses or debates it - e.g. some half-dozen brief articles or paragraphs on matters such as:

- parent-teenager tensions
- going off on holiday with teenage friends (mixed sex)
- the aims of comprehensive education.

For a while communicative methodology for some simply meant learning and practising functions instead of structures, with somewhat stultifying effects. This chapter has suggested that for the process to become dynamic rather than stultifying, learners may have to 'raise their consciousness' of the characteristic features of the speech acts in which they engage, including the ways in which unpredictability occurs and is coped with.

CHAPTER NINE

ACTIVITIES PROMOTING RANGE, FLUENCY AND ACCURACY

This chapter discusses what might be done to enable learners not just to communicate but to do so as well as possible - with range, fluency and accuracy.

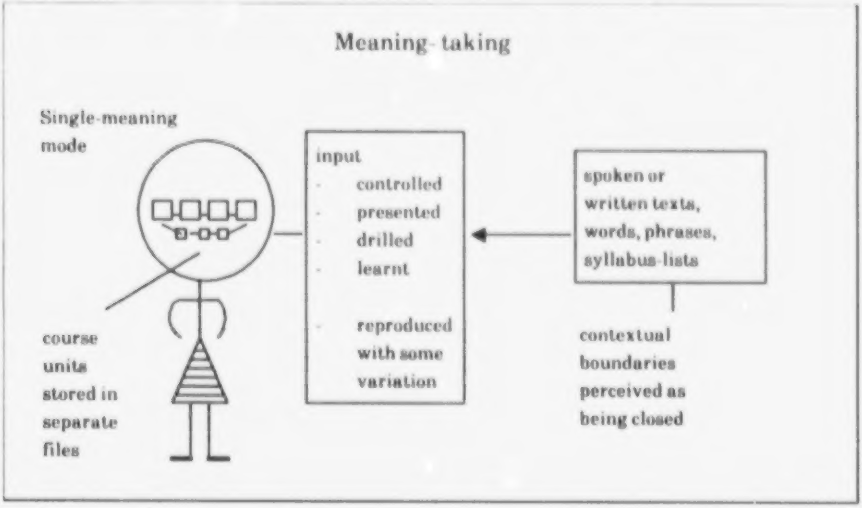
RANGE

Among the most obvious aspects of language that we might think of when considering 'range' would be range of vocabulary, range of structure and range of function. Foreign-language learners with a good range on these three dimensions would be likely to be more proficient than those who did not command the same range.

Another aspect of range that seems important is range of meaning, i.e. the difference between a single-meaning and a multi-meaning mode. This difference is set out below.

Learners with limited range

Learners with limited 'range'


Meaning- taking
Single-meaning mode
input
- controlled
- presented
- drilled
- learnt
- reproduced with some variation
spoken or written texts, words, phrases, syllabus-lists
course units stored in separate files
contextual boundaries perceived as being closed

Learners with limited range may learn particular spoken or written texts very well but are often unable to make a connection between them and their own previous experience.

One of two things tends to happen

- either, they take from the text those elements that do chime in with their experience, thereby distorting the meanings implicit in the text as a whole
- or, they take in the text as one indigestible lump, storing it in a self-contained memory file, unable to relate it to other aspects of their experience. According to HMIS reports in all parts of the UK[1], this is exactly what happens to many senior students in their Eng Lit, History and other classes.

In neither case are they able to pierce through a text in order to interact with the interlocutor(s) or writer(s) behind it or the characters within it.

I have encountered learners from S1 to S6 who thought that 'French' or 'German' consisted literally of the concrete words, phrases and texts that were given in their course-book. Those who were conscientious thought they were doing well if they learnt this corpus accurately and performed it fluently. They were 'bound' by the spoken or written texts they were studying, so their range was very limited indeed. Contextualisation is a very good thing, because it gives an important dimension of meaning to language, but contextual boundaries must be kept open, not closed, so that connections can be made by learners themselves from one context to another.

Learners with range

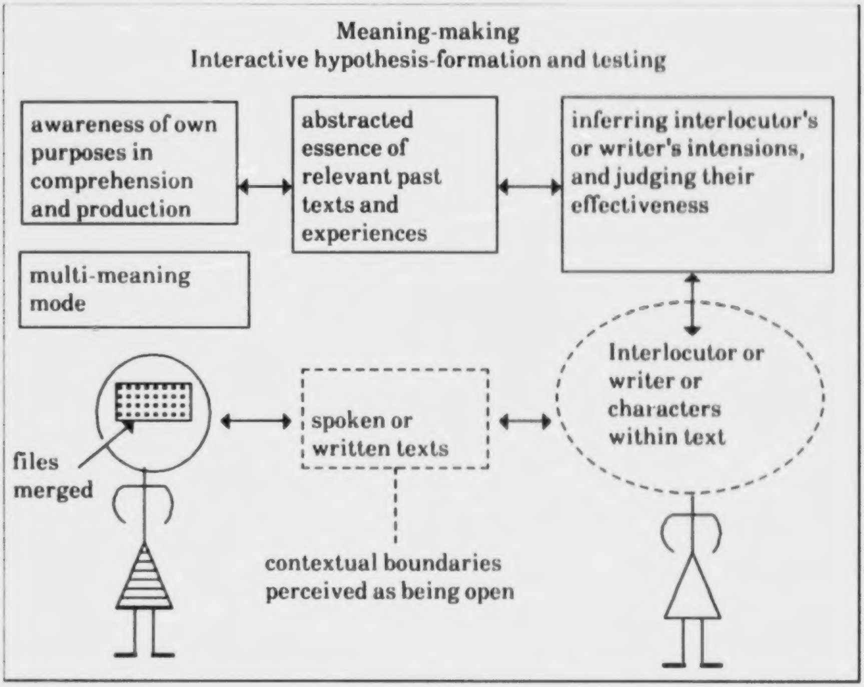
Learners with range, by bringing their own higher cognitive problem-solving capabilities into play, have their fingers on the button that switches them into a multi-meaning mode. They know when and when not to operate this mode. They build up a resource of vocabulary, function and structure that sensitises them not only to different meanings but also to different shades of essentially the same meaning. They are prepared for quick and unexpected changes of topic, a very common feature of casual conversation, and for predicting possibilities that might occur, for inferring new meanings and for guessing underlying intentions.

Rather than constantly being imprisoned within a spoken or written text, they are able to work through it in order to connect with the speaker or writer or characters within the text. They understand that meaning does not exist objectively but has to be related to experience, to be interpreted, perhaps even dynamically negotiated in interaction with others.

FLUENCY

A fluent listener is able to make meanings from a flow of continuous sound even when this is partly above the threshold of comprehension. A fluent speaker can

Learners WITH 'range'


Meaning-making
Interactive hypothesis-formation and testing
awareness of own purposes in comprehension and production
abstracted essence of relevant past texts and experiences
inferring interlocutor's or writer's intensions, and judging their effectiveness
multi-meaning mode
files merged
spoken or written texts
Interlocutor or writer or characters within text
contextual boundaries perceived as being open

keep going, both when interacting with other speakers and when monologuing. Fluency in both comprehension and production will be greatly supported by regular application of the achievement strategies exemplified in a previous chapter of this book. In addition, fluent performers will have a repertoire of discourse connectors at their disposal. In comprehension, this will enable them to recognise openings, topic-changes and closings. It will enable them to take account of what others say (*Oui, d'accord ... mais ... quand même ...*) and to string their own ideas together (*D'abord ... ensuite ... enfin ...*).

One thing that undoubtedly inhibits fluency is over-use of the internal monitor. If learners are to perform fluently, then at times they should switch off their lexical, structural and functional monitor and let language flow up from its subconscious associative sources, as happens in much of our L1 output.

They may even at times go beyond this, by switching off what I shall call their identity protection device. They will no longer think of the self in terms of nationality, ability level, social class or role as school learner, etc. Instead, the intuitive, associative self will find expression.

At other times, they will have a very clear understanding of self, whether the real self or a self that is being role-played, because the activity will require an instant yet rational response from one identified person, e.g. coping instantly with an emergency.

The price to pay for a high level of fluency with the formal monitor switched off will at times be a lowering of lexical and structural accuracy. However, two advantages may be gained: first, it provides a better insight into learners' real internalised competence than is provided by carefully monitored and hence less fluent output; and second, it provides a basis for identifying what might be attempted in subsequent activities that are oriented to accuracy. In other words, fluency activities may be of high diagnostic value.

ACCURACY

This can apply to grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and intonation, especially in those areas that are vital for meaning. To take vocabulary as an example: the pursuit of the most exact or appropriate word or phrase with which to express an idea may entail making discriminations within semantic fields: *route, voie, chemin, chaussée*; or *entrer, retourner, revenir*; or *laufen, rennen, sich beeilen*; or *heiraten, verheiraten, sich verheiraten* ...

It also implies an ability to avoid the imposition of false meaning through association with L1 - *actuel, agenda, chips, comédien, demander, déception, sensible, valable*

The role of grammar in promoting range, fluency and accuracy

Grammar is involved in different ways with range, fluency and accuracy:

- it is one means among others of creating a **range** of possibilities, e.g. the function of 'suggesting' can be realised by several different grammatical structures
- it is one means among others of facilitating **fluency** by connecting things together, e.g. in the use of pronouns instead of nouns and in the interplay between first and second persons
- it is one means among others of supporting **accuracy** in meaning, e.g. through correctness of syntactical and morphological form.

COMBINING RANGE, FLUENCY AND ACCURACY

In the CI project[2] it was established that when progressing through a unit of work many teachers tended to aim for an accurate control of a limited amount of vocabulary, function and structure by means of language presentation, then lexical, structural and functional drill and practice, e.g. using flashcards and paired-speaking worksheets, with the intention of gradually opening things out and increasing fluency and range of performance later in the unit.

Their intended mode of progression within a unit consists of:

ACCURACY > FLUENCY > RANGE

This progression goes perfectly with a 'problem-reducing' approach as described earlier in this book. Teachers favouring this approach believe that premature exposure to range has a bewildering and depressing effect on their slower learners. They express views such as : 'Why have these writers introduced the infinitive and the perfect tense in the same unit?' or 'Why have they put so much new vocabulary in? ' or 'Why have they introduced four different ways of saying the same thing? Most of my pupils cannot cope with this.' This does not imply hostility to range, but it does imply a preference for establishing as good control as possible over a limited amount of basic language before opening things up for those who can cope.

By taking accuracy, fluency and range one at a time and in that particular order, however, this strategy has not shown itself to be effective in establishing them in combination with each other, and indeed in some cases the third stage of promoting range is not reached.

An alternative progression would be:

RANGE > RANGE + FLUENCY > RANGE + FLUENCY + ACCURACY

This 'problem-creating' strategy allows learners to engage in more open activity throughout a unit of work, with the gradual imposition of as much accuracy as is possible. Rather than becoming dominated by one canonical version of a text, they are all the time learning how to operate choice - at first fairly slowly (range), then more quickly (range + fluency), then more accurately (range + fluency + accuracy).

In the remainder of this chapter, a number of support activities for promoting range, fluency and accuracy are suggested. Some have a distinctly conventional colouring and are far from being communicative in themselves - yet they are what many excellent communicators have always done in order to build up a resource that enables them to communicate well. The list can be considerably added to and modified.

The activities are organised in three sections, i.e. range, fluency and accuracy. It is not suggested that the activities that fall under any one heading can only be used for that particular purpose.

ACTIVITIES PROMOTING RANGE

Input follows randomness of real-life events

Input may come from a teacher who regularly comments briefly on what's happening in the big world outside - a major news item, a humorous incident, etc. Regional teams of foreign language assistants might possibly prepare on video a monthly news programme covering current events in the locality or the world at large. Input may also come from learners, e.g. a different group each week prepares a brief news bulletin, deliberately designed to cover a spread of topics.

Reporting on idiosyncratic pursuits

Over (say) a term each member of the class gives a brief talk on some idiosyncratic pursuit. The only rule is that it should not cover content that is catered for by other means, e.g. a course book.

Video with no sound

Play a short passage on video but with no sound. Ask class to predict what the characters were saying to each other and what they might have been thinking. If it is a foreign language video, the sound version can later be played, giving the opportunity to confirm or disconfirm. Although the main part of the activity is probably prediction of a range of possibilities for what is being said, it is also important for purposes of 'range' to discuss whether or not these predictions would have been appropriate.

Interrupted video sequence

Play a short video sequence but stop before the end. Ask the class to predict what is going to come next (as in 'A Question of Sport' on TV). Having brought out the maximum number of possibilities, show the next part of the sequence. This procedure of play - stop - predict - play further - discuss - play ... may be inserted a number of times into a sequence.

Video sound track only

Play the sound track of a brief passage of video but cover over the screen. Ask the class to imagine what is happening. It may be surprising to discover how good some people are at predicting on this basis. Several groups of my students at university, for example, on twice hearing a brief two-minute sound-track in a totally unknown language, and without seeing the screen, have been able to guess that it had to do with the political interrogation of a man by several persons in a large and fairly empty hall, during which he was asked to comment on audio recordings taken when he was on a space mission many years previously.

News flash build-up on micro

With a micro and an authoring package such as Microtext it is very easy for someone with minimal programming skill to present an exciting news incident at gapped intervals (the gaps being of any length you want), with flashing headlines and text running on screen at various speeds as though hot from the wordprocessor.

This enables a major disaster to be reported and exploited as follows:

first announcement on screen with flashing headline and (say) three lines of

> running text ... pause (say of a minute) in which viewers can express initial reactions ... follow-up information on screen (say, another three lines) ... pause in which viewers can express reactions to follow-up ... third bit of information on screen, this time perhaps an eye-witness account ... and so on.

This activity can be exploited for 'range' in that viewers may be asked to think of various possible consequences of the incident - e.g. how many dead and injured, extent of damage, what witnesses will say. Several possible predictions might be made before the next set of information comes on to screen.

Multiple interpretation of simple dialogues

Write a simple two-line dialogue on the board:

- *Qui est la?*	- *Noch einmal?*
- *Personne*	- *Nein, danke*

Ask the class to imagine as many different situations as possible in which these words would be said by different sorts of person. They should make up a range of dialogues into which these two-liners would fit. In each case one might go a little further by asking them to imagine what the persons might be thinking as well as saying.

The first of the two given dialogues above is in fact taken from the film *Les Jeunes Filles*. Jean Piat, after much persuasive talk, is on the point of attaining the desired situation of compromise with a young lady already in a state of semi-undress, when the door bell rings. By the time the door is answered the caller has gone - but unfortunately for M Piat the spell has been broken. This same dialogue could of course imply many other things too! - which is the point of the present exercise.

Most dialogues in foreign language courses are too meaningful by half. In real life and in TV plays, for example, they often hang together in very much stranger ways. Here is a self-contained cameo from a recent Sunday evening TV play:

- *Soon be lunch ... We should have had another child ...*
- *It's a tanker ...*

In context, it made perfect sense. What range of contextual meanings might be imposed on it?

Preliminary brainstorming

Before a class attempts a task it may be useful to help them with some advance preparation. The danger to be avoided is producing a master-version which they will simply attempt to copy in performance. One way of ensuring that this does not happen is to ask the class to brainstorm preliminary suggestions so as to draw attention to a range of possibilities.

Progressive presentation of report

Show a newspaper report on OHP but with most of the language removed from it except a few heavy semantic markers including probably the headline. Ask the class to imagine what the report is about. Encourage variety of prediction. Then show the report with more information revealed. Ask class once again to predict what the story is about. This time the range of possibilities will be different from the first attempt - perhaps narrower, perhaps wider. Then reveal more of the story ... and so on.

Solving problems with similar underlying structure

Assume the class has already learnt how to 'make arrangements' for (say) a camping holiday and for checking into a hotel. In order to extend their range, it will often be a good idea to give them a follow-up task, also based on making arrangements - this time perhaps for an excursion to the sea-side. A vital ingredient will be a discussion of the relevant underlying general strategies for 'making arrangements', so that learners will be able to apply them to another context, with of course consequent change of vocabulary.

In the 'problem-solving curriculum', it will be important that learners should learn to identify the underlying structure of a problem solution in order to make use of this in solving other problems with a similar underlying structure.

Topic-changing

Give a speaking task related to a particular topic - say, interviewing each other about pet animals. Learners talk on this topic until you give a signal and suddenly announce the next topic - say, a holiday abroad. They talk on this until you suddenly announce the third topic - say, sports and hobbies ... and so on. The point about this activity is that it encourages learners to talk about an unpredictable range of topics at very short notice, something that might possibly be expected of them when staying with a foreign family (e.g. at meal time).

A twist can be given to this activity by programming the classroom micro so that it puts a random range of topics on the screen at intervals.

Dissatisfied customer

A customer wishes to buy a commodity in a shop, but is constantly dissatisfied with what is on offer. The salesperson has to display several different varieties of more or less the same thing and to produce a range of arguments, in order to effect the transaction.

Different ways of saying: going up-market

Rules of social usage have already been defined as an important component in a learner's communicative competence. Learners who wish to increase their range of comprehension and expression will explore different ways of expressing ideas and of adapting language to suit particular contexts.

One way of achieving this is to go linguistically 'up-market', i.e. to explore ways of expressing ideas in a more polite, formal, elaborated manner:

> *Vous appartenez au genre de femmes qui m'attire en générale ... et c'est précisément que je subis cette attirance que je me défends contre vous si fortement ... mais pourquoi me défendre? direz-vous ... oui ... pourquoi? ... oui ... à mon grand regret, et très inexplicablement, je ne suis pas amoureux de vous ... ça n'a rien à voir avec votre personne .. c'est relatif à moi ... à moi seule ...*

The above utterance from the film *Le beau mariage* perfectly reflects the avoidance strategy of a smooth, prosperous, workaholic 35-year-old male lawyer who wishes to continue avoiding the confines of marriage.

It would be asking too much of school learners that they should produce language of such sophistication, but a study of such strategies where they are available would underline the importance of being able to express the same intention in a range of different ways, e.g. beginning with a rough-hewn *Je ne vous aime pas* and ending with the elaborate version that the lawyer has fashioned.

In similar vein Gaby, a teenage schoolgirl, somewhat elaborately expresses formal disagreement with her mother in *Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant*:

> *Ich will an deinem Geburtstag nicht mit dir streiten, Mutter, aber du sollst doch wissen, ich bin in diesen Sachen gar nicht deiner Ansicht.*

While it is true that some notions in a notional syllabus can be expressed by a word or a phrase, learners must understand that at other times these same notions may require much more extended passages of discourse before they can be expressed - e.g. an entire film or novel may represent one person's 'notion' of love, or heroism, or duty, or family ...

Different ways of saying: going down-market

Regrettably, rules of social usage appear to be understood by many as being exclusively geared to expressing oneself in ever more polite and formal ways, e.g. adding *madame* or *monsieur*, not forgetting *s'il vous plaît* and being careful to use the *vous* form when talking to most adults.

In fact, however, it is arguable that learners would benefit at least as much from learning how to express themselves in a less rather than more formal manner. Most course books teach a fairly neutral variety of the language - a strategy that can be defended on the grounds that neutral language can be used more or less effectively in a variety of circumstances, especially by non-native speakers.

From this position, however, in order to increase one's range, it is necessary to learn how to go down-market into casual everyday language, as well as up-market as described in the preceding section.

The casual conversation of French youngsters, for example, often contains a high incidence of superlatives such as *hyper-* or *mega-* or *super-* and contractions such as *mob* for *mobylette* and *pubs* for *publicités*. In the film *Diabolo Menthe* the spoken language of the schoolgirls contains many examples of contraction:

- *On a une interro écrite en math.*

and

- *T'as l'trac?*

Even the intellectual and articulate François in the film *La Dentellière* makes extensive use of casual forms, of which the following are only a small sample:

- *Et ta vie alors c'est quoi?*

and

- *Et avec Marylene, t'a jamais rencontré de garçon?*

Indeed the use of *Et* in casual speech is interesting in itself.

Even well-educated adult speakers such as Jeanne Moreau's Louise in the film *Chère Louise* are quite prepared to go down-market if the situation demands, as evidenced by her use of *quoi* as follows:

- *Je vous laisse avec ça.*
- *Ça quoi?*

- *Et Frédérique?*
- *Quoi Frédérique?*

and by her use of ellipsis, omitting the final pronoun:

- *Elle veut l'emmener?*
- *Mais sûrement pas. Elle joue avec.*

a feature that also occurs in *Diabolo Menthe*:

- *Oui d'accord, je préfère.*

The language of the film *Diva* is a sociolinguistic treasure trove in itself:

- *Où on est?*
- *Dans un château*
- *C'est quoi château?*

- *Où t'es?*
- *Ah, la voix qu'elle a!*

If learners are to cope with the pulsating realities of exchange visits or with future foreign language programmes coming into the home via satellite TV, then their sociolinguistic range will need to embrace much more than neutral forms of the language, at least in comprehension.

Mastermind

Quiz related to chosen topics and to general knowledge. Very good for range in comprehension, since answers must normally be very short.

Suitable present for

Select a person known to everybody in the group. Each member must think of a present that they would like to give that person, and say why.

Specifying criteria for job or other activity

Groups read brief article like the one given below ...

TRIO FÜR TEENIES

Mit neuen Gesichtern will die ARD die Jugendlichen wieder vor die Mattscheiben locken. Für das neue Teen-Magazin *erhalten zwei bisher Unbekannte ihre erste TV-Chance: Sabine Ritter, Münchner Fotografin (22), und Nicky Stampe, 21jähriger Produktions-Assistent aus Hamburg. Mit zum Team gehört die lustige Promenadenmischung* Trooper *- damit's bei dieser Sendung für junge Leute wirklich tierisch abgeht...*

...then prepare list of desirable personal characteristics for presenters of programmes such as *Blue Peter*, compare notes, criticise and defend each other's criteria, extrapolate to criteria for other kinds of media person such as chat show hosts, newsreaders.

Spoofing

Groups study a number of headlines, predict what each might be about, compare versions. Two headlines are 'spoofs' that appeared in French newspapers. These are to be identified and explained.

AIR FRANCE: PAS D'AVIONS AUJOURD'HUI

PREPAREZ LA RENTREE EN TRICOTANT SUR LE SABLE

LE BALLET DE L'OPERA A NEW YORK: UN LAC MEMORABLE - OVATIONS BRUYANTES ET ENTHOUSIASTES

IMBATTABLE BECKER

LE 14 JUILLET TRAGIQUE: UNE CATASTROPHE SANGLANTE ENDEUILLE LES CHAMPS-ELYSEES - LE SOLDAT INCONNU EST MORT

CRETEIL LA MERVEILLE: SEPT HEURES DE SOLEIL AU MOINS PAR MOIS - MEME EN ETE

Then groups make up their own 'spoof' headlines or short articles, relating to national, local or school events.

Generative syllabus-speak

Make up sets of cards in the following four categories drawn from the syllabus: topics, functions/notions, contexts, persons. Have a number of cards in each set. In the example below, *métier* and *temps* etc would be separate topic cards, while *on se plaint* and *on persuade* would be separate function cards.

TOPICS	FUNCTIONS OR NOTIONS	CONTEXT	PERSONS - AGE / SEX
métier	on se plaint	maison	70 (m)
temps	on persuade	plage	70 (f)
santé	on menace	rue	20 (m)
disques	ennui	cuisine	16 (m)

Learners work in pairs. Each pair chooses at random at least one topic card, two function or notion cards, one context card and two person cards. Assume they choose by chance the cards underlined in the list above, then they must make up a conversation between a male in his 40s and a teenage female, taking place on the beach on the topic of health in which (among other things) one person criticises and the other expresses boredom. Several groups should attempt this same combination, to explore the range of possibilities. This activity will also help learners to disembed particular elements from the contexts in which they initially found them and to recombine them in novel ways.

A micro could be used in order to simulate a fruit machine, and this would be better than cards at reinforcing the notion of range arising from a seemingly infinite set of permutations of a limited number of elements.

Disembedding and associative grouping

This learning strategy involves reclassifying or redefining elements by their common attributes. It involves drawing from possibly a number of different memory files those elements that have the common attribute of being relevant to a chosen topic. A topic card might be chosen at random, e.g. *les fruits*. Class brainstorms as many words and expressions as they can think of that will go with this, without necessarily producing coherent language. The activity need last only a few seconds and therefore can be fitted in regularly. Its purpose is not primarily to teach or to revise vocabulary, though both of those may happen, but rather to give learners an opportunity to disembed from different files those items that are *disponible* in their unconscious long-term memory store, and to form them into new groupings.

Several versions of almost the same thing

A team of (say) six 'assistants' has video-recorded (or audio-recorded) a number of simple talks or conversations on the same topic, e.g. favourite pet, family, an accident observed ... Learner(s) view or listen to the reading a number of times in order to comprehend the range of fact and opinion about each topic.

It would be important to offer variety of style and register within each topic. In the case of reporting an accident for example, two presentations might take the form of news bulletin reports - one giving the first news and the other giving follow-up information; another two might be conflicting eye witness accounts; and another two might be conflicting accounts from those involved in the accident. Each of those involved might then report the accident to friends or family, in a style that would differ in important ways from the one they adopted during the news interviews.

Frozen-time elaborations

A well-known technique in opera is for a singer or group of singers to stop the flow of action in order to expand vocally upon their innermost thoughts. Time is momentarily frozen at that point, allowing the characters to elaborate their philosophy, their anguish or their ecstasy:

- *O namen - namenlose Freude!*

The same technique is used widely in both cinema and everyday life, e.g. in *Le beau Mariage*:

> *Notre mariage c'était une affaire de commodité ... de convenance ... de famille ... ça ne nous apporte rien ... ça ne nous enlève rien non plus ..*

The point becomes clearer when this utterance is set out differently:

de famille
de convenance
Notre mariage c'était une affaire de commodité ...

nous enlève rien du tout
Ça ne nous apporte rien ...

Here the action flows along on the horizontal plane until it is frozen at a point at which it expands on the vertical plane, before moving forward again. The young married woman talks round about the topic, using a limited range of recursive structure (*une affaire de* ... and *ça ne nous ... rien*), fitting small refinements into the slots as she proceeds.

In *La Dentellière* time stands still for Marylene as she expresses her anguish at having been ditched by her married lover:

... la famille ... les affaires ... et puis moi ... à côté ... à portée de la main ... dans un tiroir ... salaud!

la famille *a coté*
les affaires *et puis moi* *à portée de la main* *Salaud!*
dans un tiroir

The same principle is exemplified by *Petra von Kant*:

... naturlich war es Hysterie ... Panik, Sidonie ... es war nicht mehr zu retten ... aus ... Schluß ... vorbei ...

and

... wir wollten immer neu entscheiden ... immer wach sein ... immer frei ... ( ) ... wir wollten immer glücklich sein zusammen

In the same way in classrooms it would be possible, when studying spoken or written texts, every now and again to freeze the action and to ask the class to elaborate in their own words upon what is being said, e.g.

> *Hier soir, après huit jours et sept nuits de lutte, le gigantesque incendie qui embrasait les Gorges du Tarn était pratiquement maitrisé. Enfin! Pour circonscrire le feu quelque 250 hommes ont lutté sans relâche ... en permanence relayés par l'action intensive des DC6 Canadairs et Trackers.*

Where the points of suspension are given ... the class is to elaborate further in their own words on *250 hommes ont lutté sans relâche*, introducing a range of possibilities that are not in the text but that might plausibly be there.

Studying a reference-book

This means studying and not just occasionally consulting. By reference book could be meant dictionary, grammar book, phrase book, word list, encyclopaedia. There are two different purposes that lie behind this:

a. COMPREHENSION: FROM FORM TO MEANING

The learner studies forms in order to find out how they hang together as well as to learn their general propositional meanings. The dictionary happens to open at (say) *pied*, and the reader is fascinated to learn about the range of meanings associated with this. Although in itself far removed from communicative activity, it would be unwise to reject this technique out of hand. A student of English as a foreign language in China[3] in his early stages of learning claims to have spent a few months memorising 7000 words and about 700 idiomatic phrases from a pocket bi-lingual dictionary, before moving on to Hornby's ALD which has some 20,000 enteries. After that, he claims to have had very little difficulty in reading comprehension!

b. PRODUCTION: FROM MEANING TO FORM

Here, learners have an idea of what they want to express and they go to the reference book to find out how to do this. Whilst there is the danger that this may lead to over-reliance on reference books and to false combinations of elements that would offend the purist, there is also the advantage that it helps them in seeking out and combining new forms in experimental ways in order to express intended meanings.

We should perhaps bear in mind that in the case of gifted young musicians and mathematicians, complexity of form runs many years ahead of their capacity to invest it with mature meanings.

An overzealous commitment to meanings before forms may well run counter to the communicative interests of some if not all foreign language learners.

At any rate, it is probable that thus far in attempts to introduce a communicative approach considerably too much attention may have been paid to drilling grammar for production and too little to analysing grammar for purposes of comprehending authentic texts.

ACTIVITIES PROMOTING FLUENCY

Monolingual foreign language segments

This implies accustoming learners to lesson segments that are conducted exclusively in the foreign language. It is not implied that L1 should be banished altogether, though any such use should surely be strictly limited, explicitly justified and should diminish rather than increase from first to sixth form.

Let us assume that two lessons have been taught in which 90% of the language spoken was in the foreign language, and that each consisted of seven different though related segments. In Lesson A, L1 was lightly sprinkled throughout each segment. In Lesson B, five segments were exclusively in the foreign language and the other two were a mixture of the two languages. It is likely that Lesson B would provide a better basis for fluent listening and speaking than Lesson A, because learners would not have the feeling that at the first little difficulty they or the teacher would slip quickly into L1. Lesson A is based on 'problem reduction' whereas Lesson B is geared to 'problem creation' and challenges learners to make fluent use of achievement strategies.

Intensive individual listening and reading

Of the two, listening is the more important in the initial stages, since fluent reading of most if not all types of text cannot occur until the reader has acquired a feel for the sound system of the language - not only for individual sounds but also for patterns of intonation and emphasis. It takes time and practice to become a fluent listener. So - headsets on in class, in the laboratory, at home or wherever. Provided learners learn how to direct and sustain their concentration during such activity, it will not only develop fluency in listening but eventually there may also be a considerable pay-off in fluent speech.

The value of the activity may however be considerably diminished if learners are taught to perceive listening as never anything other than a 'starter' activity that only has value when exploited in subsequent conversational tasks. Listening can be invaluable in its own right, even where there is no immediate pay-off of any sort, provided that precise comprehension (and not just vague gist extraction) has been achieved, which may require listening several times to the one passage.

Fluency in reading can be supported by asking beginners to listen to a cassette and silently follow a text at the same time, possibly even keeping track of the story or whatever by following it on the page with a finger.

Some will rightly argue that this is not how fluent readers read - they process text so quickly that it is often not represented in sound, and also they skim and scan rather than always read sequentially. Nonetheless, simultaneous listening and silent reading will help establish very basic sound-sign relationships.

Conversational gambits

Fluent conversationalists have a range of gambits at their disposal. These are particularly important for foreign-language learners, because it can be very difficult indeed to 'grab a piece of the action' when engaged in a discussion with (say) three or four native speakers.

Examples of turn-taking gambits are:

* turn-getting	- *Mais écoute, écoute, maman ...* - *Ja, aber hör mal zu ...*
* turn-maintaining	- *D'abord .. ensuite .. puis ..*
* turn-giving	- *... n'est-ce pas? / ... non?/* - *... oder?*
* turn-avoiding	- *Et toi ...?*

In topic-selection there are:

* topic nomination	- *Hast du gehört, daß ...?*
* topic introduction	- *Zuerst habe ich vor ...*
* topic avoidance	- *Moi je n'y connais rien!*
* topic completion	- *Voilà! Schluß!*

Another kind of gambit might be called topic contradiction, as in *Die bleierne Zeit* when two sisters are in disagreement:

- *Ich bin nicht hierher gekommen, um mit dir über unsere Ansichten zu streiten.*
- *Ich aber.*

There is another kind of important conversational gambit that might be called 'shadowing', a term derived from the psychology of social interaction. If people are sitting talking in a small group there is often a tendency for the less dominant participants to adopt the same postures and gestures as the dominant member, i.e. they 'shadow' that person's behaviour.

This also applies to language, but it need not indicate deference. It can indicate a variety of different things, e.g.

* Agreement

- *D'accord?*
- *D'accord*

* Putting off - as in *La Femme de l'Aviateur* when Anne is trying to rid herself of the attentions of François:

- *Ce soir?*

- *Ce soir je suis prise*
- *Demain?*
- *Demain je suis chez maman*

* Word-play - as in *Diva* when the black opera star Cynthia Hawkins buys some trinkets at a street market. The stall holder says

- *la reine de l'Afrique*

which prompts Cynthia's operatic admirer Jules to say

- *la reine de la nuit*

* Transaction - as in an interaction on a train between Maria Braun and the ticket collector

- *Ich möchte jetzt nachlösen ... die erste Klasse ... was kostet es, bitte?*
- *Es kommt darauf an, wie weit Sie fahren*
- *Es kommt darauf an, wie weit ich damit komme* (Maria hands over money)

* Making a firm contrast

- *Gestern nacht war ich Maria Braun, die mit Ihnen schlafen wollte ...*
  ... heute bin ich Maria Braun, die für Sie arbeiten möchte

The final and supreme example of 'shadowing' can only be called

* The symbiotic anticipation of passionate consummation, as Maria Braun and her soldier friend Bill slowly begin to undress one another

- *ich kenne nur einen einzigen amerikanischen Mann, der schön ist*
- *es gibt nur eine deutsche Frau, die schön ist*
- *und stark*
  und reich
- *und mutig*
- *und mutig*
- *und zärtlich*
- *und zärtlich*

This looks like becoming a 20th century answer to *Tristan und Isolde*, when ...

In their very different ways, all of these conversational gambits facilitate fluency by oiling the wheels of conversational exchange

Communal brainstorming

Learners join together, acting as a corporate individual in order to sustain a flow of language. Possibly the class may be divided into groups, with each group representing an individual. A competitive element may be introduced by engaging the two or more 'individuals' in some form of verbal joust, e.g. one group brainstorming the pros of some proposition and the other group brainstorming the cons.

Alternatively, each individual may switch off their identity protection device in order to lose their sense of self. A group may form a circle and hold hands or engage in other contactual activity. There may be rhythmic hand-clapping or background sound effects, to enhance the feeling of communality. Someone starts things off with a brief utterance which may be spoken, declaimed or sung. This is picked up by someone in the group who produces an associated utterance ... and so on. There may be a prior agreement to use this technique in order to probe a particular topic, bringing out associations that would not find expression if both the language monitor and the identity protection device were switched on. Alternatively, it could simply be word association going in any direction that the group wanted. For this sort of activity, it is essential that there should be no competition, because competition would imply separate identity.

Talking without preparation

An individual draws at random a card on which is written one topic for talk, and is required to talk spontaneously on that topic.

Inner speech

Talking articulately to oneself - reciting poems, singing songs, conversing inwardly with real or imaginary characters, playing with words. An element of rehearsal is involved but this is not to be confused with simply reciting what has been learnt by heart, because this kind of talk will often provide many variations on a common theme.

The Inner Stream of Associative Garbage

Whereas the preceding activity implies coherence and cohesion, ISAG exposes a stream of consciousness ... you just go on and on ... talking to yourself ... rather like that thing in *Punch* ... which you must surely have seen ... no? ... or is it *Private Eye* ... I can't remember ... but anyway I think it's called Great Bores of Today ... or something like that ... they think they're talking to somebody but nobody's listening ... anyway ... whether or not you find a receptive audience ... and frankly if you're like me you normally won't ... you just witter away to your heart's content ... anyway whether or not rather like and frankly but in any case note those discourse connectors ... they're necessary for this kind of talk ... however ... some people might call this stream-of-consciousness bullshitting ... sorry ... but I was talking to myself ... geddit? ... *alle Menschen werden Brüder wo dein ... tut mir leid Ludwig aber heutzutage muß man Geschwister sagen ...*

anna plurabella ... Achtung! ISAG Ich-SAG-Verbot! Es ist strengstens untersagt, auf Deutsch zu ich-sag-ieren! Ende! ... ou bien ... peut-être que ...

Inner thought

Communication feeds on a tension between total unpredictability and total predictability. In the one case, communication is impossible, in the other it is unnecessary. We normally assume predictability but know that at times we must be ready for the unexpected. When it occurs, we do not normally start working things out from scratch. To do so would be a low-level and time-consuming problem-solving strategy.

Instead, we quite often draw on a file in our memory that already contains the answer or something akin to an answer. These files are dynamic in that they allow for the selection of options in order to meet particular circumstances. That is why they are called IF-THEN files - for an exemplification of which, see Chapter Three.

Some learners probably do not possess relevant IF-THEN files for many contexts in which social interaction is called for, e.g. when staying with a foreign family they may be unaware of important norms of behaviour, in which case they may have difficulty in behaving fluently. Fluency will be increased if time is spent on helping learners to develop IF-THEN files in those areas where the culture of their own home background differs significantly from the foreign language culture.

The aim is the development of fluent, flexible thought that leads to appropriate behaviour in a range of circumstances that are not wholly familiar.

Limited-time activities

'Beat-the-clock' type activities in which as much as possible has to be packed into a fixed time scale. Point may be given to these by creating an emergency, e.g. an important phone call has to be made but you have only got money left for 30 seconds of talk.

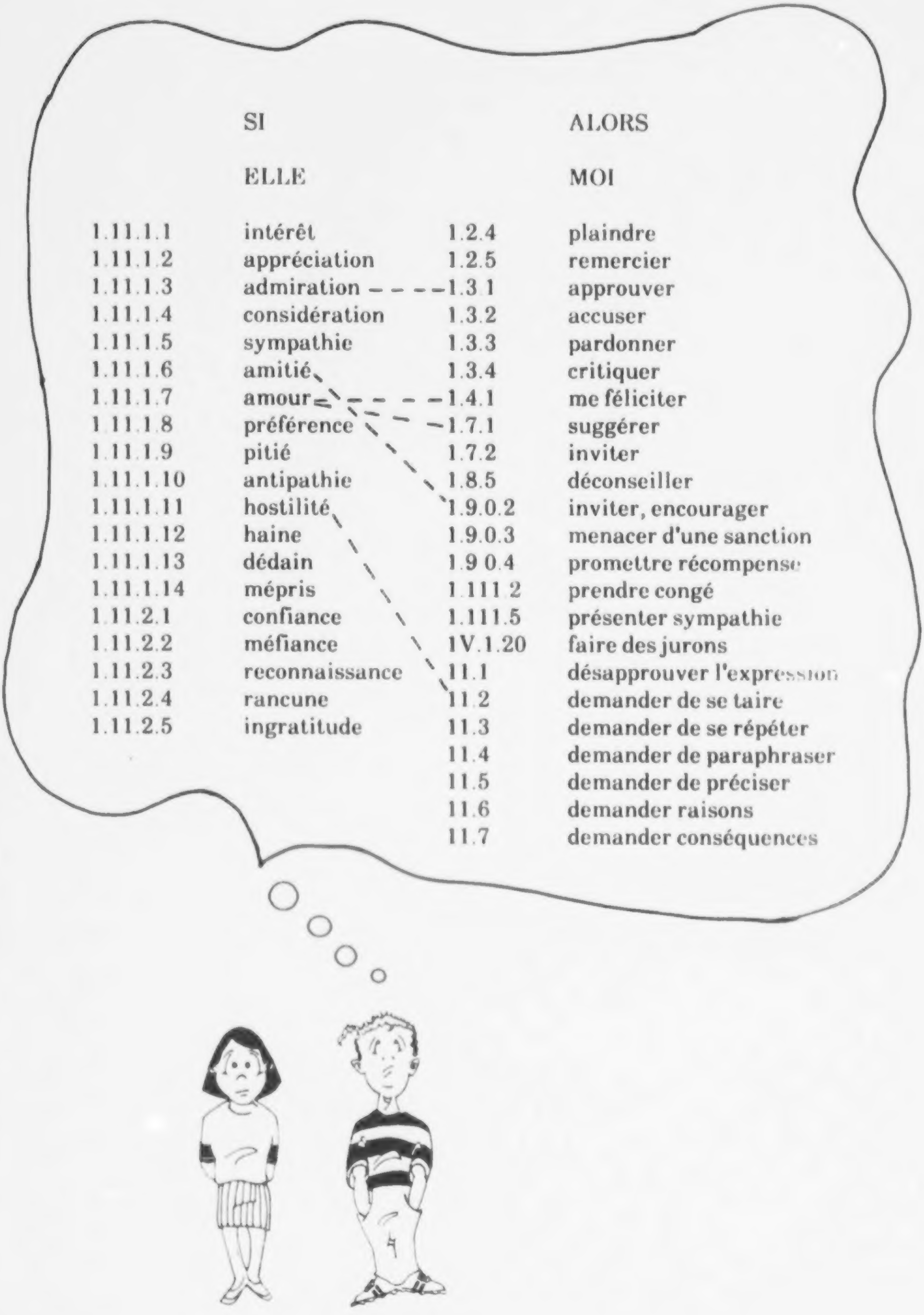
Creative reconstruction: visual

Show a detailed visual on OHP for (say) five seconds, then withdraw it. Class must describe exactly what they saw. They will not have had enough time in which to take in all the information, so they will have to use their imagination and problem-solving abilities in order to reconstruct the whole from the bits and pieces they retained.

Creative reconstruction: aural

Listen very carefully, I will say this only once!

The teacher gives the class a short but detailed foreign language account containing an important message - once only. A delay of (say) fifteen minutes



	SI		ALORS
	ELLE		MOI
1.11.1.1	intérêt	1.2.4	plaindre
1.11.1.2	appréciation	1.2.5	remercier
1.11.1.3	admiration	1.3.1	approuver
1.11.1.4	considération	1.3.2	accuser
1.11.1.5	sympathie	1.3.3	pardonner
1.11.1.6	amitié	1.3.4	critiquer
1.11.1.7	amour	1.4.1	me féliciter
1.11.1.8	préférence	1.7.1	suggérer
1.11.1.9	pitié	1.7.2	inviter
1.11.1.10	antipathie	1.8.5	déconseiller
1.11.1.11	hostilité	1.9.0.2	inviter, encourager
1.11.1.12	haine	1.9.0.3	menacer d'une sanction
1.11.1.13	dédain	1.9.0.4	promettre récompense
1.11.1.14	mépris	1.111.2	prendre congé
1.11.2.1	confiance	1.111.5	présenter sympathie
1.11.2.2	méfiance	1V.1.20	faire des jurons
1.11.2.3	reconnaissance	11.1	désapprouver l'expression
1.11.2.4	rancune	11.2	demander de se taire
1.11.2.5	ingratitude	11.3	demander de se répéter
		11.4	demander de paraphraser
		11.5	demander de préciser
		11.6	demander raisons
		11.7	demander conséquences

ensues in which the class is occupied with some other task. Then they are asked to communicate the detailed message to another party. We can only retain information in working memory for a few seconds, so after fifteen minutes learners will not be able to remember word for word what was said. Therefore they will have to reconstruct the essence of the message. This will give valuable practice in developing a fluent ability to abstract the essence of a message and then reconstruct it when it is no longer in working memory.

Social engineering

In certain tasks assign a role that asks someone to act as link person, e.g. a host or hostess, or a chairperson. This requires an ability to deal fluently on the spot with the various problems that different persons have, e.g. at the party there might be a few loners who might benefit from being introduced to each other.

Pools of silence

This may seem to be the very opposite of fluency, but in one sense it is not. If in certain kinds of talk such as high-level discussion an attempt is made to talk all of the time, then either the level of talk will plummet or the activity will run out of steam. So there are occasions when longish pauses positively enable participants to regain their mental breath in such a way as to trigger off a short period of high-level fluency until the next pool of silence occurs.

As an avid watcher of foreign language films, it is my strong impression that they often contain less talk than one might imagine. How different in many classrooms where there are often feelings of guilt if talk is not happening - incessant talk numbs the mind and is an inefficient way of promoting real fluency.

ACTIVITIES PROMOTING ACCURACY

Detect underlying similarity in pattern

Give sets of four or five sentences, each set exemplifying a particular pattern, e.g. passive in past tense. Ask learners to tell you what that pattern is or to make their own notes. Ask them to generate further sentences of their own based on that pattern. Once they are used to this they may be encouraged to note down their own hypotheses about new patterns that they encounter in authentic texts.

Detect the exception to the pattern

Give sets of four sentences. In each set three of the sentences exemplify a particular language pattern but one does not. Ask the class to identify and describe both the pattern and the exception. Ask them to make up further examples of each.

Cloze procedure

Give cloze procedure activities in which learners have to read a paragraph and decide on what the missing words might be. To do so they will have to attend to accuracy and appropriacy of word selection and grammar.

Some hands may go up in horror at the mention of cloze procedure, on the grounds that it is not in itself communicative. Nonetheless, cloze procedure activities, although normally far from communicative in themselves, are considered by some to be a good predictor of communicative proficiency, because they assess the basic competence (integrating knowledge of sentence structure, of discourse, of social use, of word-selection, etc) that underlies any specific act of communication.

Precise gist extraction

Play a tape or show a text. Ask class to select and justify key points that represent the gist of the text. Encourage discussion, comparison of ideas. Specify the criteria for selection of gist. If for example the text is about the use of animals for medical and aesthetic purposes, one group might try to extract the writer's gist; another might extract the gist from the viewpoint of someone who is 'for'; another group will look for arguments 'against'. In other words, there may be several gists in a passage, depending on the perceptual framework of the recipient of information - optimist versus pessimist, pro versus anti, etc.

Precise task specification

Set precise criteria for task completion. For example, the class might be asked to write a letter to a tourist office. The letter is to ask for accommodation to be arranged for you. Learners are to state exactly what you require in terms of date and duration of arrival, type of accommodation, price-range, number of persons, special facilities needed, proximity to ...

Practical tasks requiring precise comprehension

Give activities in which full and exact comprehension is required in order to perform some activity, e.g. play a card game, make a model, as in the section on Practical Tasks.

Competitive descriptions

Ask groups to observe an object or visual and describe it as accurately as possible. Each group has to defend its description against the views of competing groups. In this way vague generic adjectives for example will be forced to give way to more specialised ones.

Self-monitoring on word processor

If learners have access to a wordprocessor, set a task in which they must express themselves at some length. This is partly a fluency activity - so they should let the stream of associative verbiage flow freely on to the screen, with no initial monitoring. Then they examine their version on screen in order to monitor and redraft it so as to give the text an improved shape.

With advanced learners this technique has proved extremely useful in developing fluency and accuracy. With younger learners, too, there is good evidence of remarkable achievements in the form of class magazines - with range and fluency coming first, then being disciplined by accuracy.

This again makes the point that writing is a very important mode for all learners, in that it gives them an opportunity to create, then monitor. This is much more difficult in speech, because there is nothing to look at, apart from the interlocutor's expression. Not much pay-off if the writing is an illegible scrawl on a tatty exercise book, but more useful if the wordprocessor is used.

Transcription /dictation

Individual learners listen to a cassette, then write down what they hear. They may possibly check their version against a master copy. This is useful not only as a spelling check but also as an activity in which they must break down a continuous flow of sound into component elements. They will have to listen very carefully indeed in order to identify certain words or phrases, and when they do not succeed an element of prediction will be required - just like listening to a car radio with poor reception. The activity might be given face validity, e.g. a boss has dictated a letter on to cassette for a secretary to type.

The following letter is dictated to a secretary in *Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant*. Even though the method of presenting it on this page falls far short of being a proper linguistic transcription, it nonetheless shows that the secretary must be able to distinguish between content words and instruction words (e.g. *Komma, Punkt*):

> *anjosefmankiewitz ... dieadressestehtindenakten ... liebermankiewitz ... lieberfreund ... komma ... leiderwirdesmirunmöglichsein komma ... diezahlungzuleisten ... punkt ... esgibtumstände ... zwischenhimmelunderde ... punktpunktpunkt ... aberwemsageichdasfragezeichen ... ihreinverständnishoffend ... verbleibeichinfreundschaftihrepetravonkant ... ich unterschreibsgleich ... komm ...*

Alternatively, learners might transcribe an audio-recorded real spontaneous conversation between (say) two assistants. In doing so their attention will be drawn to certain features of this sort of talk - possibly hesitations, interruptions, etc - thereby giving them more accurate information on the true nature of spoken interaction, as opposed to the possibly idealised image that some may possess in their minds. The transcriptions in French published as a product of *L'enquête sur le langage de l'enfant français*[4] are revelatory - and it would do foreign-language learners good to transcribe what people actually say to each other in different sorts of context.

High-speed oral translation or interpretation

There are occasions in real life when a learner might be asked to act as switchboard between two persons who do not share a common language. In my own experience I've had to ad-lib in this way for friends, relatives, rugby teams, pipe-bands, union officials, educationalists, tourists, babies and a family cat. What is normally required is a very quick expression in one or other language of either the full or the underlying meaning intended by one of the participants. If the activity is conducted in a high-speed mode then it is often necessary to use one's wit and imagination because there isn't time to look things up. What is important here is being as accurate as possible within real-time constraints.

Studying reference books

These may be used to promote accuracy as well as range. What was stated under this heading in the section on range applies here in equal measure. Many pupils profit from encouragement to find things out from reference books, not in order to regurgitate facts but in order to further elaborate their own system of rules which they can then test out in practice.

CHAPTER TEN

STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN A COMMUNICATIVE CLASSROOM

This chapter presents some initial ideas on how aspects of action research might be incorporated into the normal range of classroom activities, allowing teachers to make a contribution to their own professional development.

It might possibly be countered that this would impose yet another burden on already overworked classroom practitioners. Why then is action research likely to be of importance?

In the past many bold and challenging policies have been put to the teaching profession. Let us take an example outside foreign-language teaching. In 1965 the *Primary Memorandum*[1] was published, setting out a philosophy for primary school education in Scotland, along lines similar to the Plowden Report elsewhere - with an emphasis on experiential learning, group and individual activity, and integration of topics round relevant tasks. Yet, almost fifteen years later a report by HM Inspectors of Schools on Primary 4 and Primary 7[2] revealed that many of the fundamental principles of the *Primary Memorandum* were not being implemented - teaching in classrooms in many cases still tended to run along traditional lines, with 'basics' being drilled within a narrowly conceived curriculum. Taking these two documents together, it would be difficult to find a more striking contrast between aspirations and realities.

It would not be unfair to argue that the same discrepancy applies in the case of the major attempted innovations in foreign-language teaching, leading to the conclusion that real change takes place on a slower timescale than most innovators would like.

Deficit model of classroom teachers

From this perspective, it is only one small step for curriculum planners to adopt a 'deficit' view of classroom teachers. If only teachers were more competent, worked harder, were better organised, if only more of them would attend our in-service courses ... etc, then our plans would have been better implemented! It is rather like the proprietor of *Fawlty Towers* flying into an incandescent rage on observing that a resident was not behaving in exactly the manner that Basil had intended for the behaviour of residents in his hotel.

The problem is essentially one of communication. If it is assumed that communication is a one-way process, then those at the receiving end are likely to misunderstand the message.

Instead of adopting a 'deficit' model of teachers, it makes more sense to accept that the great majority already possess worthwhile 'craft' skills[3].

Research then would not be directed to helping teachers overcome deficits but rather to further develop, and no doubt modify and extend in the process, those craft skills that they already possess.

Action research model

One possible way of achieving this is for classroom teachers themselves to develop techniques that allow them to reflect on what they are doing. Rather than taking theory simply as a body of knowledge handed on by curriculum designers, they would take it as a stimulus for elaborating theories of their own and for developing procedures designed to test them out in the light of their own practice. Communication could become a two-way process, because the findings of practitioner-led action research could be made to influence subsequent policy documents.

There is a possible danger, however. If we develop a new idea of our own and attempt to put it into practice, it is only too easy to allow our initial enthusiasm to cloud our judgement. For action research to be useful, it is essential that it should be both systematic and principled.

How then might classroom teachers set about the task of researching in a reasonably systematic and principled fashion into events occurring in their own classroom, with the general aim of extending their own craft knowledge?

First, we shall consider how data may systematically be gathered by busy classroom teachers who are not employed as full-time researchers. Then we shall consider a number of action research issues that might be investigated, drawing on these data-gathering procedures.

GATHERING DATA

Data may be gathered by many means, including the following:

Audio-recording lessons

It may prove useful to audio-record sample lessons or activities within lessons. Subsequently, an analysis can be made of what was said, and this analysis can be discussed with colleagues, along with the playback of the recording.

Possibly, a transcription of the audio-recorded lesson might be made in order to allow for even more detailed analysis and discussion. The recordings may be of whole-class talk or of group, paired or even individual talk. They may cover aspects of teaching, learning or assessment.

Take assessment for example: it may prove useful for students to acquire the habit of audio-recording samples of their own performance and then to analyse them on the basis of the audio-recording, possibly in discussion with fellow students or their teacher; or for the teacher to make recordings, in order to discuss with colleagues what might be meant by a particular level of performance, allowing the department to standardise its approach - very difficult to do this if audio-recordings are not made.

USING AUDIO-CASSETTE AS A MEANS OF EVALUATING OWN PERFORMANCE AS INTERLOCUTOR IN THE CONDUCT OF ORAL ACTIVITY/ASSESSMENT

I didn't realise I was/sounded so... talkative/hesitant/dominant/biased/ restricting/stilted/unresponsive/ deliberate ...
He's put the wrong cassette in again

Equally, audio-recordings might prove useful in providing feedback to teachers on their own performance as interlocutors in both normal classroom activities and in actual assessments. Did they talk too much? Was their actual tone of voice exactly what was intended? Did they give opportunity and support to some students but tend to cut others short? In a reseach project on school-based assessment in foreign languages[4], conducted by two colleagues and myself, we found that there tended to be inconsistency on these matters not only among teachers administering the same test but also within individual teachers. The analysis of audio-recorded performance offered an opportunity to gain detachment from the immediate process of interaction.

Audio-recording classroom activities then is relatively easy to do and can offer information that may be equally valuable to learners and teachers.

Video-recording lessons

One of the problems with audio-recordings, however, is that it can be difficult for teachers subsequently to identify who is speaking, particularly in group conversations or in whole-class discussion. Another drawback is that they fail to capture non-vocal communication - visual background context, gesture, facial expression, etc.

The use of video-recordings allows for easier identification of speaker and for account to be taken of most if not all non-vocal aspects of communication.

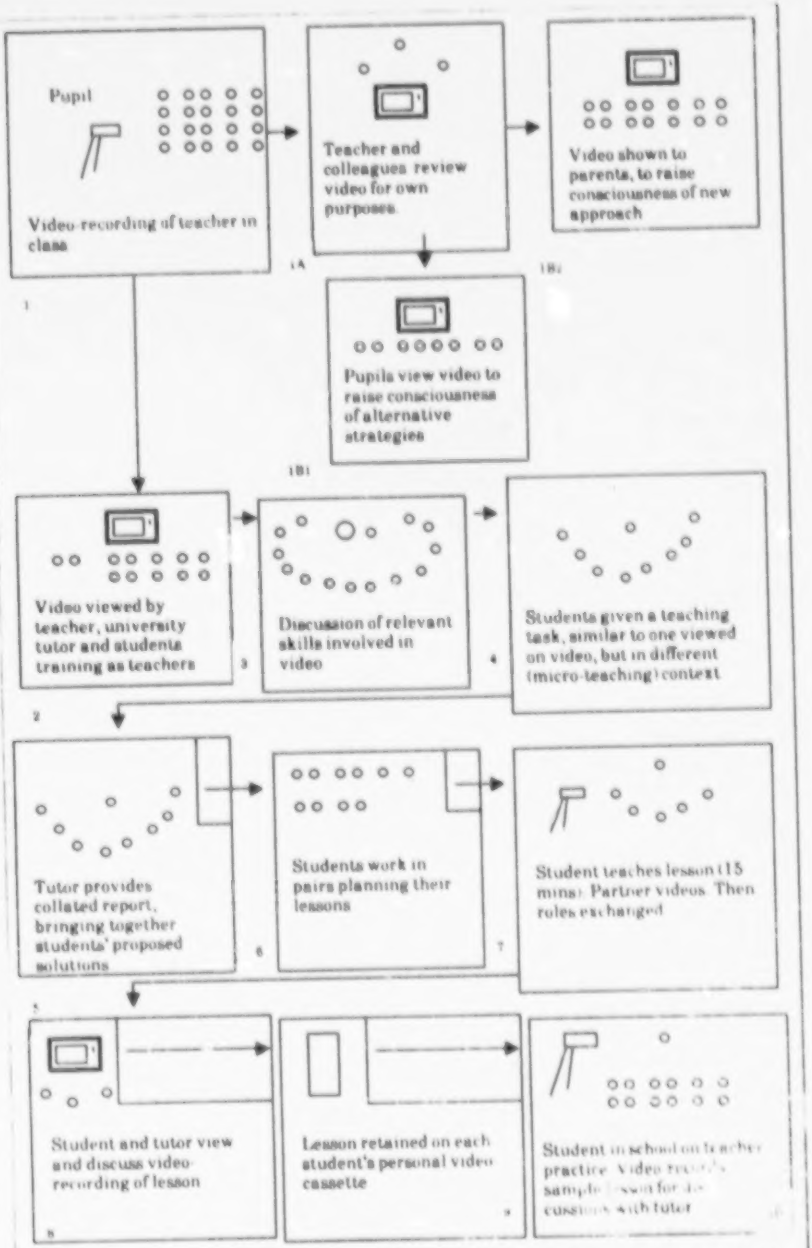
On the other hand, there may be more of a problem of obtrusiveness. A small audio-cassette recorder with built-in microphone is one thing, but a video-camera and -recorder is another. The problem, however, can easily be exaggerated. Extensive experience of making video-recordings in schools and elsewhere suggests that it does not take students long to accept video equipment as a piece of ordinary classroom furniture, but that it may take their teachers a little longer to adapt. This is only natural, because often the teacher has been the main focus of attention.

The key to success lies in reasonable regularity of occurrence, allowing participants to behave as normally as possible. It would be unrealistic to assume that every modern languages classroom could be kitted out with video-recording equipment, but there is already evidence that some departments enjoy reasonably regular access to it as and when they consider it to be desirable. With cooperative forward planning much can be achieved, and it is likely that equipment of this sort will become more readily available in the future.

Trainee teachers visiting schools on teaching practice may already be used to having their micro-teaching lessons video-recorded within their training institution.

Let me briefly describe one of the many tasks which student teachers are required to perform within the institution in which I work. They are informed that they will have a class of six 12-year-old pupils whom they have never met before and who may not know the particular foreign language the student teacher wishes to teach. The encounter will last fifteen minutes. During that time the student teacher must interact with the group in such a way as to enable them to acquire new information on a particular topic of the student teacher's choice (often information about the student teacher's own family, pets, interests, trips abroad, etc), but without a word of English being used. The task of the student teacher then is to communicate this information by interactive means but without using English. The student-teachers themselves must initially work out how they are going to approach the task. What techniques might they use in order to get their message across without recourse to English? Furthermore, how might they check that the information has been understood? Once they have pooled their ideas, these are collated and a handout is produced, often relating the task and the proposed solutions to it to a body of theory. Then, video-recordings are studied of teachers in school performing exactly the same task, in classroom conditions. The students then make their own plans. They are required to work in pairs - one video-records a lesson and the other teaches, then after fifteen minutes they swop roles and another lesson is taught. They take their video-cassette down to our Resources Centre and view the two lessons, normally with a tutor present. The aim of the exercise is not to train them in particular 'given' techniques of teaching but rather to help them develop their own pedagogical problem-solving abilities. They develop their own hypotheses on how to perform the task, and afterwards, when discussing the video-recorded lesson, they are encouraged to further refine the initial hypothesis that they had made, e.g. 'Having observed the lesson, I think it might be better next time if '

The provision of a video recording facility in school then would enable student teachers to take forward their problem-solving approach to learning how to teach, but this time in a new, different and more challenging context, and would enable qualified teachers to do the same.


Pupil
Video-recording of teacher in class
1
Teacher and colleagues review video for own purposes
1A
Video shown to parents, to raise consciousness of new approach
1B
Pupils view video to raise consciousness of alternative strategies
1B
Video viewed by teacher, university tutor and students training as teachers
2
Discussion of relevant skills involved in video
3
Students given a teaching task, similar to one viewed on video, but in different (micro-teaching) context
4
Tutor provides collated report, bringing together students' proposed solutions
5
Students work in pairs planning their lessons
6
Student teaches lesson (15 mins). Partner videos. Then roles exchanged
7
Student and tutor view and discuss video-recording of lesson
8
Lesson retained on each student's personal video cassette
9
Student in school on teacher practice. Video records sample lesson for discussions with tutor
10

USING VIDEO FOR PROBLEM-SOLVING AND CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

The same facility would also encourage pupils to define and refine hypothesised solutions to the tasks which they are asked to do. This time, it would not be tasks of teaching but rather tasks of communication. Using the same problem-solving approach, however, they could work out how to perform the task, then they could implement (and video-record) their hypothesised solution, and then view the video-recording, in order to monitor their performance and further refine their hypotheses about how the task might best be accomplished. This process would play an invaluable role in 'consciousness-raising', the importance of which has been argued earlier in this book.

Furthermore, the effects of video-recordings on pupil motivation should not be underestimated, particularly if they themselves are given responsibility for making the recording. Research findings[5] indicate benefits not only to their language development but also to their social skills.

At in-service courses it can be useful to observe video-recordings of other teachers performing in class. At the same time, however, there is inevitably some degree of alienation, because the context is different - another school, another teacher, another class, probably a different problem.

The approach advocated in the present section accords greater importance to teachers, student teachers and learners using video-feedback on their own performance in order to refine their own thinking on how that performance might be taken forward in the future.

Questionnaires

For increasing numbers of teachers at university and elsewhere, the administration of questionnaires to students is part and parcel of their normal working approach. Questionnaires may be used for formative evaluation, in which case they are likely to be given out roughly halfway through a course; or they may be given out at the end for a more summative evaluation. In either case, they can provide extremely helpful information. Last year for example I learnt that I tended to use overhead transparencies that contained too detailed information and that I did not allow students sufficient time in which to assimilate the detail - so this year I have made the necessary adjustments, but no doubt other things have gone wrong, and these will be revealed by the next questionnaire returns.

There is equally good reason for using questionnaires as a feedback device in school as well as in university, and there is no doubt that the practice is increasing.

A questionnaire to one's class might consist of highly specific questions, in which case pupils will be responding to the teacher's perception of a situation or event, i.e. jumping through the teacher's hoops. Equally, however, it might consist of general questions, in which case pupils will be able to express themselves in their own words, constructing their own perception of the situation or event, rather than responding to that of the teacher. There is room for both approaches. It depends on what the aim of the questionnaire is.

Many different topics can be covered by questionnaire, e.g. style, level, quality and pace of teaching; approach to particular aspects such as grammar, homework, use of the foreign language in class; suggestions for exploiting the present unit of work and recommendations for future units of work.

Furthermore, the questionnaire could possibly be written in the foreign language, and perhaps the returns might be processed not by the teacher but by a group of pupils, who might have the task of collating the information and preparing a consolidated report for the benefit of the class as a whole, including the teacher. There might even be a case at times for pupils themselves designing a questionnaire.

Generally, questionnaires should not be *ad hominem*, either positively or negatively - e.g. 'Do you think I am a good/bad teacher?' or 'What do you think of the foreign language assistant?' Instead, they should deal with specific issues - e.g. 'It would be helpful if you could offer three suggestions for improving our general performance in group-work'.

If staff development is to be taken seriously, then it will not do for teachers to take all of the important decisions affecting classroom processes without gaining regular and explicit feedback from learners. Questionnaires are the simplest way of gaining feedback from a large group of respondents. It would take much longer, for example, to gain feedback by means of individual or even small-group interviews.

Discussion and negotiation

Another quick and effective means of gaining feedback from classes is through whole-class discussion. At regular intervals, e.g. possibly near the beginning and end of units of work, it would make sense to discuss progress with the class as a whole. The important objective is to establish two-way communication that is helpful to all concerned, with the respective status of the participants (teacher-high, pupils-low) being minimised.

Towards the beginning of units, discussion might centre on what the unit might be about, on the particular objectives and topics that might be covered, on those areas of previous learning and experience that (initially at least) might appear most relevant. Towards the end of the unit, discussion might cover perceptions of how successful the unit had been, whether important areas remained to be covered, whether the original intentions had been realised (or had unexpected things turned up, for better or for worse?), and whether the topics and functions of the unit would need to be re-cycled at some point in the future, and if so did anyone have ideas on how and when this might be achieved?

In addition, discussion could cover more general matters that were not tied to particular units, e.g. pupils' understandings of terms such as 'achievement strategies', 'learning strategy' and 'communication'. These terms do not have one fixed, objective and agreed meaning that can be imparted to a class on a once-and-for-all basis. They require regular reference and reinterpretation, to allow their meanings to be enlarged in keeping with learners' cognitive and other development.

Issues such as these lend themselves well to whole-class discussion. The skill of the teacher lies in acting as neutral chairperson, as someone who does not invariably set and then dominate the agenda. Indeed, there could be merit in encouraging classes to contribute to the agenda and at times to take responsibility for leading the discussion, with the teacher coming in at appropriate points as back-up or respondent.

Other sorts of discussion are of course possible, in addition to the whole-class variety, e.g. groups discussing among themselves and then reporting to the teacher or class; the teacher discussing matters with groups or even individuals. As has been indicated elsewhere, there may be merit in appointing an individual or group as classroom researchers for a period of time with the task of gathering information and feeding this back to the teacher or others in the class.

Underlying these possibilities are the assumptions that the teacher does not always know best and that participation in discussion of this sort will help pupils to gain a more conscious awareness of what it takes to enhance their performance in the particular subject.

There is little point in moving in this direction, however, if the teacher is going to resent the criticisms, direct or implied, that will inevitably come. It therefore becomes important to construct the most appropriate frame of reference in the first instance, i.e. discussion will deal with specific points rather than with people as such, with the aim of developing constructive suggestions for the benefit of all rather than negative criticisms of an individual.

It is also important to establish that discussion and negotiation imply accountability not only on the part of the teacher but also the class. Living with the implications of the decisions that one has helped to take, even if one has been outvoted, is an important aspect of life in a democratic society. In consequence, once decisions have been taken, they should be recorded in writing and displayed prominently, e.g. on the classroom wall - *Nous avons décidé de ...*

There is already much evidence of excellent discussion among teachers within the Modern Languages department of their school: agendas being negotiated, policy thoroughly discussed, minutes taken of important decisions etc. This process lies at the heart of staff development. It is already being extended to allow for discussion with learners as well as with teaching colleagues, and this section has provided some initial suggestions on how this healthy development might be taken forward.

Triangulation

This term has a number of senses within educational research. Here, it is taken in the sense of 'investigator triangulation'[6] which implies making use of a third party to provide a different perspective from that of the normal class teacher and class of pupils. Possibly the third party might be a colleague in the Modern Languages department, a learning support (sometimes still called 'remedial') teacher, a foreign language assistant, a senior pupil, a student teacher on teaching practice, a teacher trainer, a parent.

Let us consider one possible form of triangulation, occuring within what is commonly called cooperative teaching between a Modern Languages teacher (MLT) and a Learning Support teacher (LST). Whilst of course the MLT and

LST will have much in common, the value of their interaction lies in the fact that, because of their different training and concerns, they are highly likely to have differing perspectives on the same classroom phenomena. This potentially can be to the benefit of all parties, but particularly the MLT who as a result of interaction with the LST might learn things about certain pupils in the class and about his or her personal way of teaching those pupils that otherwise would have passed unnoticed.

The purpose of triangulation is to bring out meanings that otherwise in a straightforward interaction between two parties might lie dormant and hence become a possible source of confusion and even confrontation. It is possible for example that the MLT might think that a particular lesson was reasonably satisfactory for all members of the class in terms of its pace, focus, clarity, comprehensibility, sequencing, variation and content, but the LST might note that some pupils were having difficulty on some of these dimensions. It is equally possible that the reverse might apply, i.e. the MLT thinking that the lesson had gone less well but the LST noting that pupils had in fact picked up more than what the MLT had suspected. Without the mediation of the LST, the lesson would have one meaning for the MLT and a different, contradictory meaning for at least some of the class.

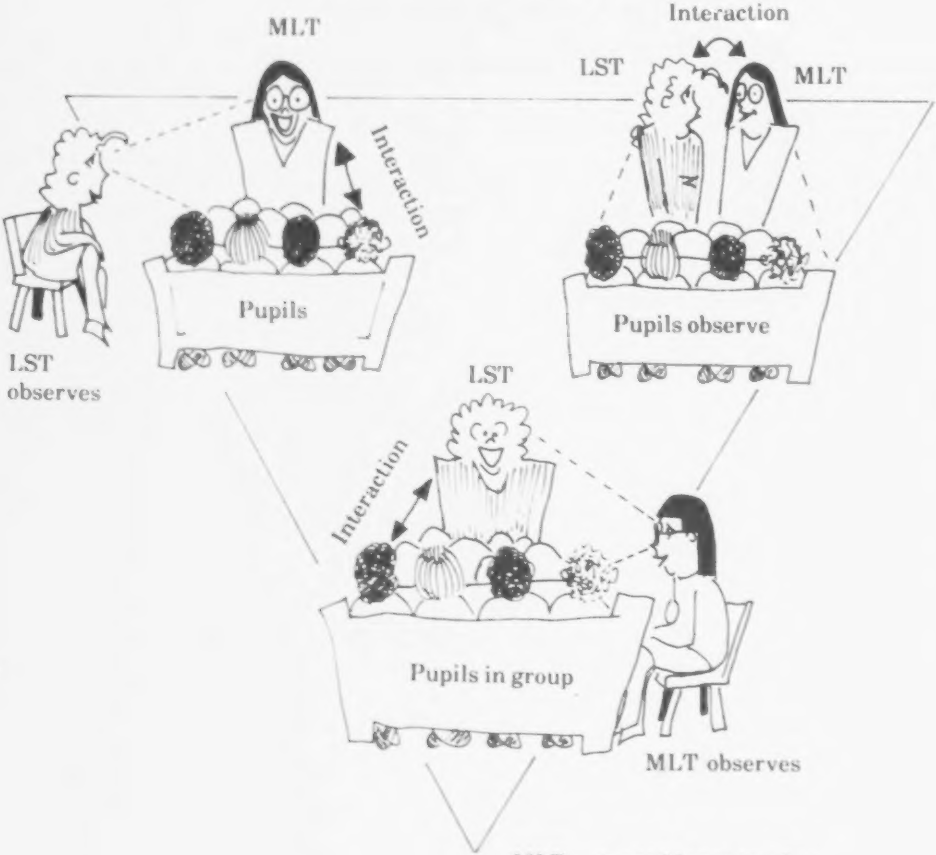
The LST might fulfil the role in at least two different ways:

- by acting simply as a fly on the wall, observing what happens between MLT and class but not intervening, then discussing matters afterwards with the MLT and/or some or all of the pupils. In this case, the role of LST will be one of observation, discussion, advice, counselling - forming an unobtrusive link between MLT and class, helping those two parties to understand each other better

- by functioning as a participant in lessons, interacting with the other two parties. In this case, the LST may play as active a role as the other parties in creating meanings within the lesson. Each of the three parties can observe and reflect on the interaction between the other two parties; and can reflect on their own personal interaction with these two parties. The MLT for example might have helpful things to say about the interaction between LST and pupils; and the pupils might have helpful things to say about the interaction between MLT and LST. This formula then allows each party to share with the others the particular set of perceptions that they have gained, in order to allow a consensual understanding to emerge, perhaps to be negotiated.

Triangulation rests on the assumption that meanings are often not given, objective or obvious, but instead may be elusive, subjective and disguised. On this view, if meanings are to be shared, they must be negotiated through social interaction. For triangulation to be successful, it is essential that there should be mutual respect and reciprocated confidence among the three parties. It will not work if the parties are in a rigidly hierarchical relationship to each other, or if the presence of one, e.g. the LST, is resented by another, e.g. the MLT.

AN INSTANCE OF TRIANGULATION



MLT = mod langs teacher

LST = learning support teacher

OBSERVERS DISCLOSE THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THE NATURE, PURPOSES AND OUTCOMES OF THE INTERACTIONS THEY HAVE OBSERVED, LEADING TO NEGOTIATION OF SHARED MEANINGS

It is furthermore essential that the MLT and LST should first agree on the purposes of their interaction and the particular roles that they will perform. To take but one example: if the MLT intends operating a problem-creating strategy, as described earlier in this book, it is essential that the LST should know this, otherwise triangulation will create rather than resolve confusion.

A colleague based in the Centre for Japanese Studies of the University of Stirling was responsible for introducing Japanese into two secondary schools to classes of senior students. In one of them there was an interesting and productive example of triangulation. It was only possible for this colleague to visit the school twice per week in order to teach classes. Fortunately, the classics teacher in the school was interested in Japanese. Although she did not possess any formal qualification in the language, she had already learnt some Japanese and was very interested in the culture. She attended the lessons taught by my colleague, to some extent functioning in the role of learner herself, and was able to take the class for one further period per week, during which she was able to teach certain aspects of culture and to be available as a back-up teacher of the language, e.g. helping students with any points that were causing difficulty. The two teachers were regularly able to talk things over, and the class undoubtedly benefited.

A final data-gathering technique, **the checklist**, is discussed in the following section (Issues for investigation, Question 1).

ISSUES FOR INVESTIGATION

Thus far, the discussion has centred mainly on techniques available to classroom teachers that will enable them to gather and make sense of data. But for what purpose?

It is now time to turn to the actual topics that might be investigated. This entails either posing questions to which an answer will be sought, or forming hypotheses that will be tested and perhaps subsequently modified.

Below are set out in preliminary form a few research questions that busy classroom teachers might wish to investigate for themselves:

Question 1

WHAT IN FACT HAPPENS WHEN X OCCURS?

This could imply 'happens at the time' or 'happens afterwards' (i.e. consequences of the events at the time).

To answer this question, a description of events is needed, but no value judgement.

Examples of this sort of question would be:

...**when whole-class teaching occurs?**
...**when a diagnostic speaking test is administered?**
...**when differentiated activity is introduced?**
...**when units of work begin with group activity rather than with whole-class presentations?**
...**when teachers operate a problem-creating approach?**
...**when group-work is organised on a stations approach?**
...**when the teacher makes a deliberate attempt to run the class by means of the foreign language?**

...when pupils are asked to do simulations?
...when pupils are asked to do role-plays?
...when the teacher simultaneously acts as interlocutor and assessor in administering an oral test?
... when the roles of assessor and interlocutor are separated?
... when pupils are encouraged to formulate rules for themselves?

Clearly, in order to do their everyday job of teaching, teachers must consciously or subconsciously come up with at least a provisional answer to each of these questions, and indeed many more of the same sort. In doing so, they may make use of their professional knowledge, their commonsense judgement and their craft skills built up gradually by dint of experience.

Is it necessary to go any further than that?

It would be surprising if the provisional answer to each of these questions was always 'spot on' in the case of every pupil in every class. Accordingly, it does make sense to run a systematic check on some if not all of these questions, in order to find out what more can be learnt. Data relevant to the particular question may be gathered by drawing appropriately on the data-gathering techniques already described.

The main purpose in answering questions of this sort is to describe what happens. To achieve this purpose, it may suffice simply to make notes based on the data that have been gathered, e.g. from audio-recordings of sample lessons. Equally, however, it may at times prove useful to prepare in advance a checklist, allowing instances of predicted types of occurrence to be ticked off. In the case of 'differentiated activity' for example, a checklist might allow for each pupil to be tracked in terms of each level of differentiated activity attempted and completed. The checklist might be completed by the teacher, but there could be good reason for pupils themselves making their own entries, either on the one checklist for the whole class or on an individual checklist. In either case, the teacher would be able to see at a glance what each pupil had done and still required to do.

Checklists take time to prepare, but once prepared they can often be quickly and easily completed. A drawback, however, is that the items on the checklist (necessarily drawn up before the event) may not fully correspond to what occurs in the event - allowing important fish to slip through the net. Nonetheless, over time, checklists can gradually be improved so as to catch most of the important events that occur. This is fine if indeed the checklist captures events that occur, but there is a danger that nature might mirror art, i.e. that classroom events might come to be over-influenced by what is on the checklist, that is, a teacher, having constructed a checklist might (without realising it) teach in such a way as to produce entries for the checklist, rather than use the checklist in order to capture what is taught. Nonetheless, provided that account is taken of this possible danger, checklists can constitute a simple means of processing useful information.

Once the purpose has been achieved, i.e. a description produced, then more evaluative questions may be posed, e.g. 'Now that I can describe what happens, why does it happen? Is it desirable or undesirable? Is it what I expected? Might it in any way be improved?' These questions cannot be answered by descriptive techniques alone. It may be necessary to formulate hypotheses that can be tested.

Question 2

HOW CAN X BE MADE TO WORK BETTER?

In this case, examples of X might be:

...the organisation of group activity
...the administration of diagnostic assessment
...learner performance in open-ended tasks
...teacher performance in implementing a problem-creating approach

Perhaps the first thing to do would be to describe what occurs at present (as in Question 1 above). This of itself may provide clues leading to possible improvement.

Alternatively, it may make sense to begin with a brainstorming or consultancy approach by inviting one's colleagues or pupils to provide suggestions. Preferably, these should spring from observation of what occurs at present, possibly making use of triangulation as previously described.

At any rate, a new hypothesis is developed on how X might be improved.

To take one possible example, let us assume that pupils are not performing well in open-ended tasks, in which case it might be hypothesised that 'performance will improve to the extent that techniques of conversational management are explicitly taught.' The teacher would then take time to help pupils come to terms with what is involved in conversational management (e.g. achievement strategies, as described earlier) and then would describe their performance in open-ended tasks to see if there were any obvious differences in their performance as a result of the changed treatment. It would be important to do this systematically, i.e. not just spend a couple of minutes on conversational management and then judge its effectiveness on the basis of a quick follow-up task. Instead, time would be taken to ensure that the necessary skills were assimilated, and performance would be monitored over a number of open-ended tasks in order to establish that any gains were permanent.

Simply describing what happens on a before-after basis, however, will not really suffice. Improvement has to be judged not only in terms of observable behaviour but also in terms of the participants' feelings. Accordingly, it would be important to find out from pupils and colleagues (as well as oneself) what their feelings were about the change that had been made. Do they think it is working for them? Have they any suggestions on how it might be further improved?

Question 3

WHICH IS THE BETTER WAY OF DOING IT, X OR Y?

Examples of this sort of question might be:

> ... teaching sentence-grammar deductively (rules, then examples then texts), OR inductively (texts, then examples then rules), OR not teaching it but encouraging learners to formulate their own rules, OR assuming that learners will acquire them unconsciously through communicative interaction
>
> ... using the native language on printed worksheets in order to contextualise and specify the requirements of tasks of communication, OR using the foreign language for this purpose
>
> ... setting specific tasks of communication in relation to authentic texts, OR leaving it to learners to work out for themselves what they might do
>
> ... running the class almost completely in the foreign language, OR using the native language for a number of specific purposes

It will not be possible for a classroom teacher to do a controlled experiment in which the competing options X, Y etc are systematically tested out under identical conditions. Life in schools is too varied, unpredictable and complicated!

Indeed, it may possibly not be desirable to run an experiment at all. A better answer may possibly be found by reading what one can about the issue and by sitting down with one's colleagues and thinking really hard, taking account of the overall aims that the department has established for the year-group and trying to work out which of the competing options goes best with those aims. Once a particular option has been selected as the most desirable, then the department would do its best to implement it.

Let us consider the last of the questions specified above as an example - i.e. native language versus foreign language as the main means of managing the class. If the department aims to implement a communicative approach, then it does not make sense to run classes by means of the native language. It is much more plausible to use the foreign language for this purpose. The two options only appear to have equal plausibility to the extent that the overall aims of the department are forgotten.

If, however, once account has been taken of the department's aims there still remains genuine doubt as to which option to choose, then it might prove possible to test them out in classroom practice, not in order to prove something definitively once and for all but in order to establish a further provisional hypothesis that can be tested.

In one particular initiative[7] 50 lower-school pupils were organised in two matched groups, each with the same teacher who attempted to incorporate the same structures into the lessons. The experimental group received fourteen weeks delayed oral activity and a further seven weeks of partly delayed oral activity, whereas the control group were asked to speak from the start. In tests at the end of the experiment, the experimental group were significantly better in listening comprehension and also better in speaking (though in this case not to a statistically significant extent). From the mid-test to the final test, the experimental group gained in their scores, whereas the control group's scores decreased.

In this case then, two plausible strategies were tested out, and in particular attention was focussed on the hypothesis that delayed speaking would ultimately be to the benefit of learners.

However, it is necessary to be cautious in interpreting any results arising from experimentation of this sort, for inevitably they beg large numbers of questions - e.g. What sport of speaking did the control group do? Was it interactive speaking of the sort described in the section on achievement strategies, or was it merely drilling and the expression of simple personal information? ...

Furthermore, it should not be assumed that, when two competing options are evaluated against each other, one of them will necessarily be best in all circumstances. There is some evidence for example[8] in support of aptitude-treatment interaction, i.e. learners of relatively low aptitude benefiting from one method (here called 'treatment'), e.g. an inductive approach, while learners of higher aptitude benefit more from another 'treatment', e.g. a more deductive approach. There is similar evidence in support of age-treatment interaction[9].

Assuming, however, that options X and Y are to be tested out, it will not be a good idea for Teacher A to attempt option X and Teacher B to attempt option Y. If X proves more successful than Y, this might be because Teacher A is a better teacher than Teacher B, or because Teacher A had a more suitable timetable or a better class than Teacher B, rather than because option X was better than option Y. It would make more sense for all members of the department to discuss thoroughly what each option involved, to establish agreed procedures for implementation and to run each for an agreed period of time with a number of classes, then to review the findings, which might consist of results of tests or other assessments, plus classroom data gathered by some of the techniques previously described, plus the perceptions of those involved, preferably both learners and teachers.

Question 4

HOW MIGHT I LEARN WHAT IS PASSING THROUGH MY PUPILS' MINDS WHEN THEY DO X?

This question is directed to the strategies that pupils actually operate when performing in the foreign language classroom.

Examples of this sort of question would be:

...when they read authentic texts?
...when they write a penfriend letter?
...when they perform a simulated tourist transaction?
...when they prepare and present an oral report?
...when they watch a foreign-language programme on video?
...when they perform grammatical exercises?
...when they receive a foreign-language presentation from the teacher?

The type of investigation that aims to answer these questions is called 'mentalistic' research. It represents the other side of the coin from what is revealed in answer to Question 1 (in which 'observable' events were described). Here, the aim is to describe events that are not observable, i.e. those happening inside the learner's head.

As attempts are increasingly made to implement a learner-centred approach, research of this sort has begun to attract attention, though it is fair to state that for some researchers mentalistic research will always be lacking in rigour because of the almost inevitably illusory and fugitive nature of its object.

At any rate, techniques are being developed that may allow useful insights to be gained into possible discrepancies between the strategies that a teacher thinks a learner is operating and those that the learner is actually operating. Reported studies[10] indicate that there can be a considerable discrepancy between those two perspectives, hence the value of this type of investigation.

Broadly, there are two techniques.

First, there is *thinking aloud*. Whilst actually performing a task, the learner provides a voice-over, describing each step in the process of performing the task. This lends itself well to manual activities, but there are obvious problems in its application to a foreign-language classroom, in which many activities entail speaking in the foreign language. It would be impossible to ask a learner to speak in the foreign language and at the same time provide a voice-over in his or her native language. On the other hand, it has proved possible to apply this technique when learners were performing tasks that involved reading and/or writing. They were able to think aloud the actual steps that they were taking in performance of the task.

The value of this technique is that it runs concurrently with the actual performance of the task. If there is too long a time-gap between performance of the activity and the act of thinking aloud, then the likelihood arises of some degree of distortion of the strategies that were actually implemented, on the grounds that our minds cannot help editing past experience.

Second, there is *self-observation after the event*. Researchers using self-observation techniques draw a distinction between introspection, i.e. recall within a few seconds of the event and therefore with very little time in which distortion can occur, and retrospection, i.e. recall some minutes, hours or days afterwards. In both cases, recall may be achieved simply through an act of memory or it may be stimulated by means of playback of an audio-or video-recording of a lesson episode.

This type of research may be applied to teachers and student teachers in regard to their teaching as well as to learners in regard to their learning. In my own work for example, when tutoring student teachers, I find that recall based on video-recordings of lessons they have taught can be extremely helpful. The playback can be stopped at any point and a student teacher can be asked to explain what he or she was thinking at that moment. This offers insight into the process of decision-making operating inside the student's head.

They may be asked to explain for example

- why they allowed a particular episode to run on
- why they switched briefly into the native language
- why they responded differently to pupils A and B
- why they changed the pace of the lesson at a particular point.

The value of interaction of this sort is twofold: it allows insights to be revealed that otherwise could have remained latent, and it gives student-teachers an opportunity to verbalise the strategies that they in fact operated. This process of verbalisation almost certainly helps to 'raise their consciousness' of what they are doing and gives them a greater degree of conscious control.

The same procedures may be applied to learners at school. The video-playback may be stopped and learners may be invited to explain

- why they chose to say X
- why they intervened in the discussion at point Y
- why they remained silent at point Z ... etc.

Discussion could centre on sentence-structure, e.g. on why a learner chose to say *J'ai allé au cinéma* ..., or on function, e.g. on why the learner chose to 'accept' rather than 'refuse'.

The aim is to allow them without fear of censure to 'unfold' the strategies that they actually operate, allowing teacher and learner from that point to consider how performance might be improved.

Teachers interested in investigations of this sort will have to think carefully about elicitation technique:

- possibly an open question may be asked, e.g. 'Can you describe how you set about performing this task?'
- possibly the questions may be more specific, e.g. 'Can you remember the first thing you did? Can you possibly think why you did this? ... etc'

Elicitation may be built into specification of the task, e.g.

- 'You are to do this reading task. While doing it, please try to think of what you do in order to perform the task. As soon as you are finished, I'd be

> obliged if you would come to my desk in order to tell me how you set about doing the task.'

In cases where the favoured technique is learner self-reporting by means of introspection, teachers have stopped a lesson in full flow in order to ask the whole class to write down what they were thinking. This could have future as well as past reference, e.g. towards the end of a lesson a task could be set that would be begun next day, and the class could be asked to write down exactly what they thought they would do in order to perform the task. The teacher could then scan the information before the next day's lesson began and if necessary take appropriate action.

Teachers and others invigilating at examinations easily become aware of the difference between the strategies that learners operate. Some learners jump straight into the examination task, others take time to think about it and gain an overview.

To take another task, attempting to comprehend input offered by the teacher during a foreign-language presentation, many learners operate a strategy of non-interaction, even though they may be concentrating very hard indeed. As has been indicated earlier in this book, this is likely to be a less successful strategy than one in which learners intervene in order to make the input more charged with meaning for them as individuals. Mentalistic investigation could prove useful in this area, e.g. playing back to the class a video-recording of a presentation lesson in which the class was operating the less successful strategy, i.e. the non-interventionist one, and then stopping the playback at key points to ask what learners were thinking at the time and to discuss with them ways whereby they might have intervened in order to obtain more charged input.

One of the most useful mentalistic techniques of all is for the teacher not to attempt to elicit but instead to encourage learners to keep a diary in which they will describe and comment on the strategies that they actually use, e.g.:

- When the teacher is talking fast in German and I have difficulty in understanding, it helps if I ...
- When using a dictionary in order to look up new words, I find it is important to ...

In consequence, one application of mentalistic research that could be integrated into normal classroom work without too much fuss or difficulty would consist of asking successful learners to try to describe for the benefit of others in the class how they set about performing particular tasks.

In one particular reported study[11], for example, learners at secondary level were asked to perform a reading task in a foreign language and to think aloud as they did this. Those who proved to be successful readers were found to have operated a strategy of reading in broad phrases, of skipping inessential words and of guessing the meaning of new words from the context. Those who proved to be less successful tended not to skip inessential words but tended to refer to a glossary rather than make inferences from contextual clues. Mentalistic research based on 'thinking aloud' brought these two strategies to light and provided a basis on which the less successful readers could receive further training.

Research of this sort[12] has also shed interesting light on general strategies of learning, i.e. not only on foreign-language learning or on communication in a foreign language. By using specific questions in a questionnaire as the elicitation technique, based on retrospective recall, learners have been asked to specify whether during lessons they tended to:

a) repeat the material to themselves orally or in writing
b) paraphrase the material in their own words
c) characterise the material in some way, e.g. by labelling or by looking for an illustrative example, or
d) relate the material to some other material of which they already had had experience.

Those reporting the findings of such investigations claim that on average only 50% of students were attending to the lesson content at any one given time, though their appearances might have suggested a higher percentage, and that strategy a) was used by most students, rather than any of the other strategies which represent a higher order of information processing.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

Attempts to implement a communicative approach in schools and elsewhere have been made for several years now. The point may soon be reached at which the profession is ready for change. This need not imply the abandonment of communication in favour of something else - for it would be difficult to think of what the alternative might be. Rather, it implies an evolution from the 'first' to a 'second' generation of Communicative Methodology.

As a shorthand, I shall call the first generation CM1 and the second CM2.

In the short-term of course the overriding aim within the UK will rightly be to make a success of Standard Grade and GCSE. The CM2 that I have in mind will desirably influence these events in the short-term, but it seems more likely that it will increasingly come into play afterwards, once the profession has regained its breath after its first attack on these major national reforms and is ready to develop them further and indeed to look beyond them.

In what ways will CM2 differ from CM1?

It is desirable that there should be a move in certain directions that have already been justified in this book, i.e. a move towards:

- problem-creating strategies operated by teachers, though not to the exclusion of problem-reducing strategies
- achievement strategies operated by learners, though not to the exclusion of reduction strategies
- learning by means of automatisation and consciousness-raising in respect of rules of phrase/sentence structure, discourse structure, social usage and communication strategy
- a shift towards comprehension as a major goal, with interactive 'speaking in order to comprehend' assuming at least as much importance as 'comprehending in order to speak' or 'speaking in order to transmit information'
- a variety of techniques designed to promote range, fluency and accuracy, and arguably in that order, within units of work.

What will power this evolutionary change?

To some extent it might be explained as the further working out of a formula that has already been set - and certainly most of the elements in the equation for CM2 were established in at least initial form during CM1, e.g. focus on communicative function, paired and group-work, assessment for diagnosis, assessment for graded levels of achievement, exploitation of authentic material, use of the foreign language as the main medium of classroom interaction.

To some extent, however, CM2 will be influenced by two additional external factors:

- the new technologies, which are taking us into an '**information culture**';

and

- a heightened awareness of the relevance of foreign languages for industry, both manufacturing (export and import) and service, as we move into what politicians like to call an '**enterprise culture**'.

These two 'cultures' acting together will profoundly affect the lives of all of us, including our perceptions of and procedures for CM2.

Breaking the classroom mould

As a rule, though of course with many exceptions, CM1 has tended to be applied within the framework of Modern Languages as a school subject, occupying a given spot in the timetable, taught by specialists who are trained as Modern Languages teachers to pupils organised into different kinds of class.

It is likely that further developments in classroom practice will unfold, still within the context of CM1. In particular, further use of:

- microcomputers in the classroom, especially for wordprocessing, enabling pupils working individually or in groups to draft and re-draft texts of various sorts
- classroom perimeter laboratories which are gradually replacing language laboratories and allowing for more diversified group-work in class, with pupils engaging in a variety of integrated multi-skill activities - e.g. listening in a group to an audio-cassette, taking notes, then restructuring the notes and adding other inputs to them in order to produce an oral report accompanied by a written summary of main points.

These two developments will allow pupils to assume greater responsibility for determining and charting their own progress through units of work.

Despite these worthwhile developments occurring within the modern languages classroom, it has to be acknowledged that one of the major problems with modern languages has been their framing as a school subject. As CM1 evolves into CM2, it is greatly to be desired that this framework will be broken down, in part at least, and that a foreign language will be used by learners outside as well as inside the modern languages classroom.

Among the possibilities for increased foreign-language use outside the modern languages classroom are:

a. ELSEWHERE IN THE SCHOOL

It will become increasingly possible for pupils to use electronic mail and database facilities in their school resource centre and elsewhere. This will allow them, for example, to communicate at a distance with pupils in other countries, not only in order to develop their foreign-language competence but also in order to obtain first-hand information that they themselves have commissioned that is directly relevant to other subjects in their curriculum. Almost any subject, ranging from history, geography and economics to sport and aesthetics, could be enhanced in this way. Both their foreign-language skills and their other-subject knowledge would benefit.

In addition, it would be desirable that CM2 should witness an increase in the number of 'immersion' programmes in school. So far, there have been disappointingly few of these, though where reported[1], the results have been promising.

'Immersion' can be interpreted in various ways and should not be confused with 'submersion' which implies sacrificing the pupil's mother tongue in favour of a higher-status language as the sole or dominant medium of education, with negative implications for their subsequent cognitive and affective development. In the UK, good progress might be made even if 'immersion' were restricted to pupils taking one additional school subject (which is what happened in the study referred to above) or taking a range of optional modules in a number of subjects - through the medium of the foreign language.

Post 1992, it may become more possible than at present for teachers from other countries in Europe to obtain teaching posts in the UK, and vice versa. A French teacher of geography working in a UK school, for example, might prepare an 'immersion' class for an international examination in geography, to be taken in French; or alternatively might offer French modules in geography to various classes, so that each class used two languages in order to study this particular subject. Modules via French or any other European foreign language might be offered in a variety of subjects. This could be a priority area for pilot experimentation and research.

b. IN THE HOME

Whether by means of satellite or computer, there will be an increase of foreign-language input into the home - if that is what people in the home wish to select. The problem will not consist of a lack of foreign-language input but rather of knowledge concerning what to do with it.

Recently I was approached independently by two highly qualified, well educated adults, each occupying a distinguished position in Scottish society, neither of them a foreign-languages specialist but both keen to make progress - in the one case by building on a residual knowledge of school French and in the other by beginning Italian. Although their motivation was very high, neither was quite sure how best to set about their respective tasks.

Many pupils and adults (including teachers) are in exactly the same position.

So, how might learners set about enhancing their foreign-language competence in the home? One promising approach consists of 'interrogating texts', spoken as well as written, using the new technologies.

Let us take as an example video-recordings of foreign-language programmes - subject of course to the law on copyright and/or each individual's moral conscience pertaining thereto! At present, a common method of exploiting video in school classrooms consists of playing a programme to a whole class and then asking pupils to perform tasks related to it. It is doubtful if this is a particularly good way of exploiting video.

It is almost certainly more fruitful to encourage learners to work on their own - sitting near the screen so as to pick up all relevant visual detail, wearing a headset so as to cut out extraneous noise (something that I personally find essential), and able at will to make the machine stop, re-wind, go fast-forward and play.

If a programme is viewed only once, at a distance and at a rate that might not suit the individual learner, then in my own experience this is not enough. Two or three viewings, controlled by the learner, are required. During one of these viewings the learner should 'interrogate' the text by stopping, re-winding, re-playing, looking words up in a dictionary, taking notes etc. During another viewing the learner should view the programme through from start to finish without subtitles (covering them over if they are there).

A pertinent research study conducted in Canada[2] investigated three combinations of TV and script with learners at Grades 5 and 6:

* normal subtitling, i.e. talk in L2, with subtitles in L1
* bimodal input, i.e. talk and subtitles in L2
* reverse subtitling, i.e. talk in L1, with subtitles in L2.

The criterion was both comprehension of the passages and subsequent recall of them in L2. The most successful strategy was reverse subtitling, then bimodal input, with normal subtitling being the least successful.

The researchers concluded that:

> ... normal subtitling actually works against the development of L2 skills because processing script in L1 appears to obliterate all of the foreign features of the original input, language included.

The auditory inputs tended to be mapped on to the visual (written) ones, rather than the reverse. The visual (written) ones were more easily filed away and recalled, allowing learners subsequently to re-construct a text in spoken form.

A follow-up study[3] revealed reverse subtitling again to be superior to bimodal input which in turn was superior to L2 script-only.

This is not to suggest that all video programmes of the future, for purposes of foreign-language learning, should be spoken in L1 with subtitling in L2! There is enormous value in grafting away at a video-film in spoken L2. It is clear nonetheless that reverse subtitling is a combination to be taken seriously.

A more significant conclusion is that bimodal input, with talk in either L1 or L2 and with subtitling in L2, carries promise for the future. It would be silly, however, to reject normal subtitling out of hand. I myself find it useful to look at certain L2 films once in this way, provided that on subsequent occasions the subtitles are covered over.

Surely the new technologies will be able to provide the sophisticated subtitling service that foreign-language learning requires.

We all at times say 'If only ...!' If one single element were to be identified as the best bet for making a major impact on foreign-language learning, then it would consist of making available to each pupil per year a library of (say) fifteen hours of video-recorded programmes.

By interrogating video-recorded material in this way, whether in the home or by booking time in a resource centre, learners would gradually accumulate an invaluable competence in the comprehension of spoken and written language, with a probability that in time this would become a source of creativity and spontaneity in speech and in writing, as thoughts in the foreign language bubbled up to reach the forefront of the learner's consciousness. That this does not happen at present to the extent that it might is explained by the erroneous assumption that each comprehension activity must have an immediate short-term pay-off in production. Not so. The painstaking interrogation of thought-provoking spoken or written texts in order to comprehend their deep significance has value in itself and needs no further justification.

c. IN SOCIETY OUTSIDE HOME AND SCHOOL

In the aftermath of 1992 there is a reasonable chance that the national consciousness will be penetrated by the notion that fluency in foreign languages can be of direct benefit to industry and commerce, not only in manufacturing industries on the export-import side, but also in service industries such as banking, insurance, catering and tourism. Although it will be an uphill struggle, it is noteworthy that already leading figures in the world of work have begun to throw their weight solidly and publicly behind the promotion of foreign languages. The motivation is clearly of the instrumental variety, as described in an earlier chapter, and therefore will not suit everybody, but nonetheless this raising of the utilitarian profile is to be welcomed.

A leading figure in the EEC mentioned to me recently that an office was being set up in one of Scotland's major cities that was designed to promote 'small businesses' and the 'new technologies' - two of the current buzz-terms of EEC-speak. Those running small businesses and interested in the market abroad might have access to the services of this office - which included a massive database on many different regions abroad providing information on matters such as population trends, legal services and local industries. The database was entirely in French. It was so extensive that it could not be translated into English. Potential consumers of the database would therefore have to be able to read French in order to make use of it. This is only one example. Just as pupils at school go out into the immediate community in order to gather first-hand data relevant to their other school subjects, how worthwhile it would be if in the future the same were possible in respect of a foreign language.

Apart from the instrumental gains referred to above, it is likely that equal gains might be made in more cultural matters, especially by means of Festivals of Languages which already are making an impact, thanks to the efforts of many schoolteachers and others. The Council of Europe is lending support to this notion and is committed to promoting events of this sort under its aegis. Beyond that, post-1992 how pleasant it would be to imagine that in our towns and cities there might be an increase in the number of small communities - shopkeepers, caterers etc - that were French-speaking, German-speaking, Italian-speaking, Spanish-speaking ... etc. Even if the relaxation of trade barriers had persuaded them to come here mainly for instrumental purposes, their presence would be of cultural and linguistic as well as instrumental value to us.

Developing an integrated network

In short then, in CM2 a foreign language will not be limited to two main inputs (the teacher and the course-book) occurring within the classroom and controlled by the teacher. A wider range of inputs in and out of class will be available and will be usable for a wider range of purposes.

Learners will have to develop a system of their own for coordinating these potentially diverse inputs to form one complex, integrated network, and in order to achieve this will count on support and advice from their teachers.

Communication within a diversified community

At the aforementioned Council of Europe conference, a number of participants working within particular commissions expressed the view that the development of communicative competence was not just a modern languages issue but also one that had implications for society as a whole. A more communicative society would be one in which meanings were negotiated rather than dogmatically asserted and imposed. The question was raised as to whether enough adults (and others) in and out of school really wish to communicate with each other and to accept the responsibilities that this implies.

The second generation of communicative methodology will embrace teachers of all subjects, including foreign languages, and many other members of society, including parents, prospective parents, employers and politicians.

A practical and realisable implication of this ideal is that in staff development courses and initiatives of the future, foreign-language teachers will surely be mixing in with people of other backgrounds. Part of our problem has been the narrow frame of reference that we have imposed on ourselves, i.e. teachers of foreign languages in school who either communicate with nobody or who at best communicate with those who are most like us.

One of the most interesting developments in which I personally have been involved in recent years has been concerned with part-time courses at Bachelor's and Master's level. My classes for each of these degrees consist of a mix of teachers of different subjects and year-groups from secondary schools, primary schools, further education, colleges of education, intermingled with nurses, nurse teachers, health visitors and parents - all of them prepared to devote two evenings per week for three years in order to pursue studies of their choice in education.

Diversity of this sort is a positive advantage. To observe a foreign-language teacher participating in a one-hour workshop discussion task along with a drama teacher, a home economics teacher, a health visitor, a parent and two nurse-teachers, working out together a stragegy for promoting health education within our society, is motivating for all concerned. It offers everyone a range of experience that would not be available to them if they were simply taking subject-based in-service courses, and it encourages them to develop skills in communication in order to bridge the real gaps in perception that initially divide them as a group.

Learner autonomy

Whilst the aim of foreign-language learning must surely be the development of communicative competence, it is also important to bear certain broader aims in mind, in particular, learner autonomy.

This is well described in a recently published Council of Europe document[4]:

> *Furthermore, language learning can no longer be treated as a purely technical matter, treatable in isolation from social, cultural and political aspects of education. At every point, issues are raised concerning the relations of the individual and the community; the nature of authority; the relations between teacher and learner; the status of the citizen. In these respects, recent projects have followed the philosophy underlying the doctrines of human rights central to the work of the Council of Europe: to promote the development of autonomous, that is to say, free, self-aware and self-reliant but socially responsible European citizens ... In accordance with this philosophy of education, communication is seen as an integral, necessary aspect of the process of social cooperation, and beliefs; to negotiate common goals and strategies for reaching them; to manage disagreements and conflicts without recourse to violence; to replace prejudice and intolerance by understanding and acceptance.*

Enterprise culture

We are informed that we are moving into an enterprise culture, and that educational institutions at all levels should aim to prepare learners to participate fully in it. If enterprise simply means pursuing one's own interest competitively at the expense of others, I doubt if it would gain much support from the teaching profession. If on the other hand it means encouraging learners to use their own resources, to take initiatives of their own within a framework that is ultimately caring and cooperative, then by all means let the enterprise culture commence. I cannot think of any subject in the school curriculum in which there is as much scope for enterprise as there is in modern languages. Many of the communication strategies advocated in this book advocate risk-taking at the expense of playing safe, and they are at least as relevant to those conducting their business or their daily lives in any language as they are to those learning a foreign language.

From graded levels of syllabus to stages of development

It cannot be denied that the large-scale attempt to implement a graded objectives approach in modern languages, has been of great benefit

- to learners, in that short-term goals have given them a sense of purpose, direction, achievement, relevance and confidence, features that were sadly lacking in the past;
- to teachers, in that participation at grass-roots level in any one of the large number of graded schemes has in many instances had a revitalising effect on motivation, confidence and professional competence.

Without graded schemes it would be impossible to conceive of national systems of curriculum and assessment such as GCSE and Standard Grade assuming their present forms.

One danger in any graded approach, however, is that unless one is very careful it may have a restricting effect. As communicative methodology moves into a second generation, and a much wider range of inputs becomes available to learners, it becomes increasingly difficult to envisage all of these inputs (some of which desirably will be selected by learners themselves) being accommodated within a graded system as envisaged at present.

The graded approach has worked well when the range of material has been controlled - by the teacher, or course writer, or working group or some combination of these. But what if a learner, making intelligent use of the new technologies (e.g. by working intensively at home or in a resource base with a video plus computer back-up), wished as quickly as possible to come to terms with (say) real films in the foreign language? Would it be necessary to move gradually up through a series of graded levels before attempting a real film? I very much doubt it. It would make more sense to grapple with the real thing as soon as possible. In other words, the new technologies will offer an exciting range of new starting points - which will call into question the basis on which graded levels are at present constructed.

There is no reason why the starting level in a graded syllabus should necessarily be mainly concerned with personal language (e.g. talking about pets and family) and transactional language geared to penfriend or tourist visits. These make sense as starting points, but there could be other, significantly different starting points too.

The question arises as to whether our foreign-language performance develops from one recognisable graded level of syllabus to the next. I do not believe it has been established that it does.

There are two different approaches that are regularly confused with each other: First, the **grade-related** approach which consists of matching learner performance against explicit performance indicators set at a number of different grades on a specified syllabus that is **external** to the learner. Second, the **stage-related** approach which consists of describing learner performance as fully as possible, and of making inferences as to the **internal** stage of foreign-language development that the learner has reached, somewhere on the long road from zero to native-speaker proficiency.

a. external, grade-related criteria

It has certainly not been established that the grade-related schemes developed within the graded objectives approach, and further elaborated to form the basis of GCSE and Standard Grade, despite their great merit when compared with the schemes which they are designed to replace, are particularly valid or reliable ways of charting learner performance. They are constructed on the *a priori* assumption that a given number of carefully differentiated grades of performance exist. A mould is thereby created, consisting of a given number of levels of performance. Tests are constructed, with this mould in mind. Learner performance in the tests is, as it were, poured into the mould, and when it comes out of the mould - there it is, apparently existing at a given number of grades for a given level. It is possible however that the pre-cast mould and the specially designed tests may have forced learner performance to adopt the particular shape in which it now appears.

b. internal, stage-related development

This approach implies a description of learner performance and then matching this, not against particular levels of syllabus (e.g. GCSE) and to grades within these levels, but against a theory of how foreign-language proficiency develops. The descriptions might be used in two complementary ways:

First, they might be compared with previous descriptions of what individual learners had achieved, providing a profile of the learner's personal development in the foreign language. That is, learners would be compared with their own previous performance, rather than with the average for the year-group (normative assessment) or with externally set targets at various levels (grade-related criteria). The present would be rooted in the past and might offer valuable projections for the future.

Second, after carefully studying large numbers of such descriptions within a population of learners as a whole, it might then be possible to detect general stages of foreign-language development - but the point would be that the number and nature of the stages would be derived from the descriptions; the descriptors would not be derived from an *a priori* judgement that there were a given number of levels of syllabus or of grades within these levels.

None of this is meant to be a frontal attack on graded schemes. They are essential to the further development of a first generation communicative

GRADE-RELATED

- Different levels of syllabus (external to learner)
- Different grades within each level
- Learner performance matched against performance indicators for each grade within each level
- GCSE and Standard Grade fit this general model, though each differs from it in particular detail. They would occupy one of the levels in the scheme below.

Syllabus Levels	Grades	Performance Descriptors
4	1	....
	2	....
	3	....
	4	....
	5	....
	6	....
3	1	....
	2	....
	3	....
	4	....
	5	....
	6	....
2	1	....
	2	....
	3	....
	4	....
	5	....
	6	....
1	1	....
	2	....
	3	....
	4	....
	5	....
	6	....

This approach does not explain why there should be X syllabus levels, or Y grades within these levels. Nor does it explain how (say) Grade 4 at Level 3 relates to (say) Grade 1 at Level 2.

STAGE-RELATED

- Different stages of internalised foreign-language competence
- Same progression through stages for all learners (c.f. Piaget's intuitive, concrete operational and formal abstract stages of cognitive and other development)
- Learners differ in rate of progress through stages, and in number of stages through which they wish to progress

Stages: inventory of activities that learners can perform plus linguistic description of features of performance on these activities, when they have internalised the competencies relevant to the stage

Stage 3

....

....

....

....

Stage 2

....

....

....

....

Stage 1

....

....

....

....

This approach locates all learners within one integrated framework, but is based on unproven assumptions about how foreign-language competence develops, possibly verifiable by longitudinal research, see final page.

approach. In time, however, the profession will be ready to move beyond them, as it works out how best to describe learner performance in itself.

There is no guarantee even that separate stages of foreign-language development exist.

It is possible that progression from starting point to a high degree of proficiency is such a confused and messy business, with so many different factors involved - e.g. fluency, accuracy, range, pronunciation, intonation, functional command, perception of task, motivation, attitude, learning style - all of them subject to phases of apparent growth followed by apparent backsliding and then further apparent growth, but with each factor progressing and backsliding at different rates, that the muddied waters might never clear at any point to allow us to state with confidence that a stage has been attained.

If stages do exist, then personally I would be surprised if there were more than three reasonably distinguishable stages embracing all learners at school from first to final year. This is only surmise, however, because a major longitudinal research project would be required before the number and nature of stages could be properly established.

Let us assume for the moment that there are indeed three stages through which learners might progress during their six or seven years at secondary school. What implications might this have for the foreign languages curriculum?

A three-stage modular curriculum

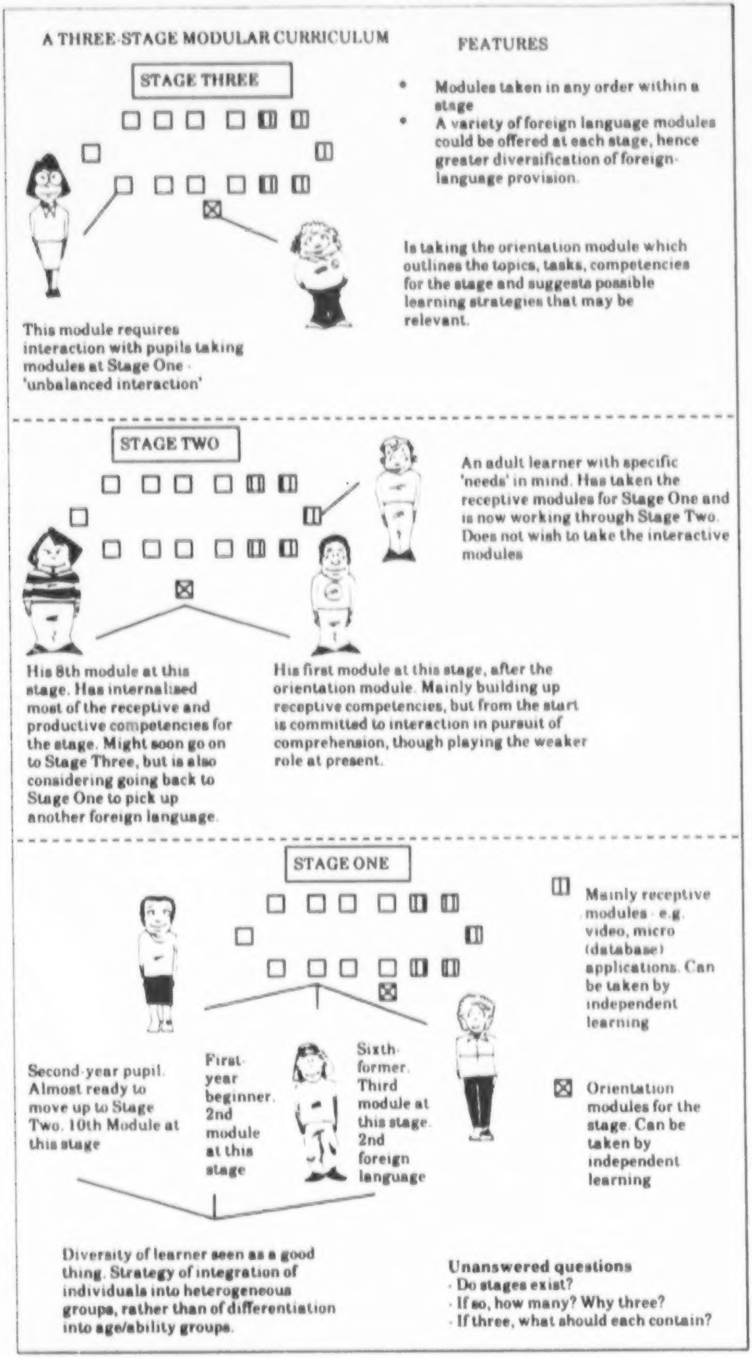
At present, the pattern is fairly clear. Pupils tend to be organised in year-groups, within each of which there is provision for differentiation - either on the basis of setting (i.e. top, middle, bottom sets) or of mixed-ability classes with inner differentiation (i.e. top, middle and bottom groups operating for some but not all of the time within each class). The organisation of differentiated activity has proved a tough nut for many teachers to crack, which is not to deny the progress that many others have made.

One of the problems with the present system of division into year-groups with differentiation, as described above, is that it manifestly does not correspond to internalised stages of foreign-language development. There are certain pupils in any school third year, for example, who have internalised much more than certain pupils in fourth year, even though they may have covered less of the overall syllabus.

If there is merit in the assumption that there are only three distinguishable stages of development embracing all learners, then the foreign language curriculum might conceivably be organised on a completely different basis, reversing the trend to ever-increasing differentiation. It might be organised on a modular basis along the following lines:

- within each of the three stages stage the modules could be taken in any order;

- there would be no gradation in difficulty from one module to another within a stage;



A THREE-STAGE MODULAR CURRICULUM

FEATURES

- Modules taken in any order within a stage
- A variety of foreign language modules could be offered at each stage, hence greater diversification of foreign-language provision.

STAGE THREE

This module requires interaction with pupils taking modules at Stage One - 'unbalanced interaction'

Is taking the orientation module which outlines the topics, tasks, competencies for the stage and suggests possible learning strategies that may be relevant.

STAGE TWO

An adult learner with specific 'needs' in mind. Has taken the receptive modules for Stage One and is now working through Stage Two. Does not wish to take the interactive modules

His 8th module at this stage. Has internalised most of the receptive and productive competencies for the stage. Might soon go on to Stage Three, but is also considering going back to Stage One to pick up another foreign language.

His first module at this stage, after the orientation module. Mainly building up receptive competencies, but from the start is committed to interaction in pursuit of comprehension, though playing the weaker role at present.

STAGE ONE

◫ Mainly receptive modules - e.g. video, micro (database) applications. Can be taken by independent learning

☒ Orientation modules for the stage. Can be taken by independent learning

Second-year pupil. Almost ready to move up to Stage Two. 10th Module at this stage

First-year beginner. 2nd module at this stage

Sixth-former. Third module at this stage. 2nd foreign language

Diversity of learner seen as a good thing. Strategy of integration of individuals into heterogeneous groups, rather than of differentiation into age/ability groups.

Unanswered questions
- Do stages exist?
- If so, how many? Why three?
- If three, what should each contain?

- there would be no fixed number of modules;
- modules could be constructed from a variety of sources and would cover a variety of topics and tasks, i.e. they would not be based exclusively on transactions and simple personal exchanges. Most modules would be geared to communication, but some (possibly designed for individual activity, using high-quality software) might explicitly deal with important aspects of the language system - e.g. structure, vocabulary, speech acts - relevant to the particular stage;
- when starting at any given stage, pupils would concentrate mainly on comprehension, beginning with a relatively silent period, though from the start this would include interactive activity, i.e. adopting the weaker role in 'speaking for comprehension' as previously described;
- as they gradually came to terms with the basic requirements of the stage, they would find it easier to engage in a wider range of more extended speaking and writing activities;
- progression therefore would not be built into the design of a set of course materials, as it is at present, i.e. a system of gradual accretion as each unit adds in a few new structures. Instead, progression would occur within the learner, as he/she gradually learnt to do more and more with materials of roughly the same difficulty in successive modules within a stage;
- it would not be necessary to complete all modules within a stage, before moving up to the next stage. The decision on when to move up could be based on one or more assessments, or it could result from discussion between pupil and teachers. It would simply be necessary to wait until a new module was being started at the next stage, and the pupil would move up and begin work, joining others (probably of different ages) who had been there for some time;
- the class would not be the sole unit of organisation. Some modules could be designed to be taken largely on an individual basis in a resource area, making use of the new technologies. Within a year, as pupils moved from one module to the next, it would be likely that they encountered a variety of teachers;
- over time, as teachers became familiar with the system, the boundaries between modules would begin to disappear, to be replaced by a series of interconnected activities within the one particular stage, with pupils entering and exiting from the stage more or less at any time that suited;
- within the modern languages department there would be only three stages of class, covering all learners from first to final year, as opposed to the present system which differentiates pupils into year groups and further differentiates them into ability sets/groups within each year-group. In consequence, it would be far easier than at present to offer a wider range of foreign languages to a wider range of learners. Real choice would be available to learners at several different points in any year as to whether to move up to a new stage or to take another foreign language at Stage One.

A modular approach in foreign-language learning is already well-known, e.g. in the National Certificate (SCOTVEC) scheme in Scotland, which embraces an increasing range of languages and contains four levels of module per language. However, there is a flaw in the design, in that for each language, despite a praiseworthy degree of flexibility being built into the scheme as a whole, there is only one kind of Module 1 and Module 2, with Module 1 being geared to personal and transactional language use. That is, the modules are geared to a concept of syllabus gradation. A modular scheme of the sort recommended in this chapter, geared to a concept of stages of foreign-language development, would allow for many different starting and pick-up points, with the consequence that there could be several different modules per stage.

The importance of unbalanced interaction

It has already been argued that in the information-oriented society of the future, it will become extremely important for pupils to develop interrogation skills:

- in talk, this will include interrogating fluent speakers;
- in writing, this will include interrogating databases containing very large amounts of information.

When a conversation occurs at present between two or more pupils, then any one pupil's comprehension tends to be limited to what the other(s) can produce. If the two or more pupils are at roughly the same level of proficiency, then this means that there may be no significant gap between comprehension and production. If interrogation is limited to what peer-group pupils can produce, then it must be very thin indeed.

The kind of speaking advocated in this book has been based on the different argument that, some of the time at least, and indeed as regularly as possible, pupils should be talking with others who possess a higher or a lower degree of proficiency in the language than they do.

In this connection one of the findings of the Burstall report[5] has relevance. Among the most successful types of primary-school class learning French were those in which there was a mixture of ages. The younger pupils were not actually supposed to be having French, but inevitably their curiosity got the better of them and they looked and listened while their older classmates had their French lessons. When eventually the time came for the younger pupils to begin French, they were already beyond the starting line, from which point it was also useful for them to be able to interact with older pupils in the same class who had already had French for one or more years.

One general conclusion arising from studies quoted in this book is that there is a case for relatively silent periods, not just at the start of a programme but every now and again, just as there is a case for periods of unbalanced interaction in which pupils interact with others who are at a higher or a lower stage of proficiency than they are.

Clearly, there are limitations to the feasibility of introducing unbalanced interaction on a wide scale under present conditions. Nonetheless, it might prove possible for all senior pupils (say, in the final two years), as an integral component of their own foreign-language curriculum, to engage in interaction with pupils from more junior classes. Establishing an uneven balance of this sort might well be to the benefit of both parties.

The weaker partners will be able to test out their own production and to extend their comprehension. The face validity of this role is high - after all, this is generally the reality of the situation when one is abroad and functioning in a foreign language.

For the stronger party the benefit will lie in the opportunity to cover topics dealt with in previous years but this time more extensively as information-givers rather than -receivers. In this role they will not only be providing extensive information but will also be experimenting with strategies designed to bring things out of the younger, weaker partners - an act of communication in itself.

The three-stage modular model of curriculum developed earlier in this section would also help. Some of the modules at Stage Three might require communication with learners at Stages One or Two. Furthermore, within any one stage there would be some learners who had only recently moved up to that stage and who accordingly were the weaker partners when interacting with other learners who were almost ready to move up from that stage. On many occasions, this may be as much imbalance as was required.

In order to achieve a further significant advance in speaking, then, it may prove necessary to go well beyond a cue-card approach based on equality of role, in order to create a degree of imbalance in which those in the weaker role are challenged to develop sophisticated strategies of speaking for comprehension.

The three-stage curriculum as outlined in this chapter will in my view represent a promising way forward, going beyond the present grade-related schemes. However, it will not come into operation tomorrow. Quite apart from the organisational and administrative problems that it would pose, it rests on a number of unproven assumptions:

- that communicative competence in a foreign language is internalised in stages, and that these do not necessarily correspond all that closely to the stages of external syllabus (in which account is taken of factors such as sequencing of items and rate of class-progression) through which learners at present proceed;

- that these stages can be described in terms that the profession can deal with (the distinction between basic interpersonal communicative skills and cognitive-academic language proficiency may in time be helpful in this regard);

- that the profession knows what kind of provision (in terms of external syllabus, materials, activities and assessment) to make for learners at each stage, so as to enable them to gain a confident command of their stage and to trigger off the motivations and the internalisation mechanisms that will take them on to the next one.

These assumptions should be investigated, by means of a series of mainly descriptive longitudinal research studies following learners throughout their secondary education and beyond.

A long-term objective.

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Richard Johnstone is a senior lecturer in Education at the University of Stirling. Director of its concurrent teacher education programme. Director of several research and development projects funded by the Scottish Education Department in the area of foreign-language learning in schools.

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ISBN 0 948003 08 1